Salt

May/June 2020

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

Our Changing Nature

Coyotes in the Neighborhood

The Quest to Save the Venus Flytrap

A Journey from River to Sea

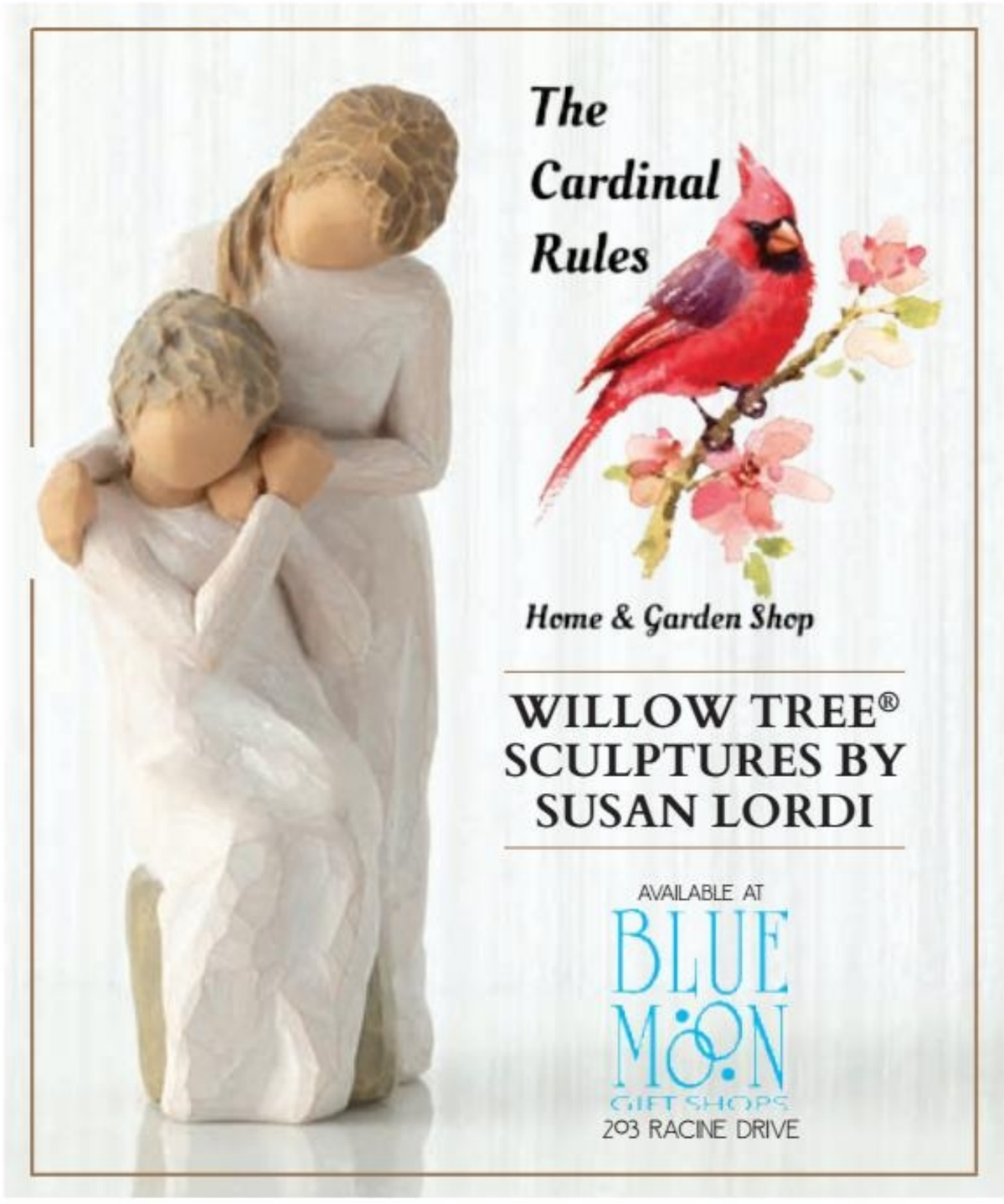
The Salty Eye of Artist Hank Carter

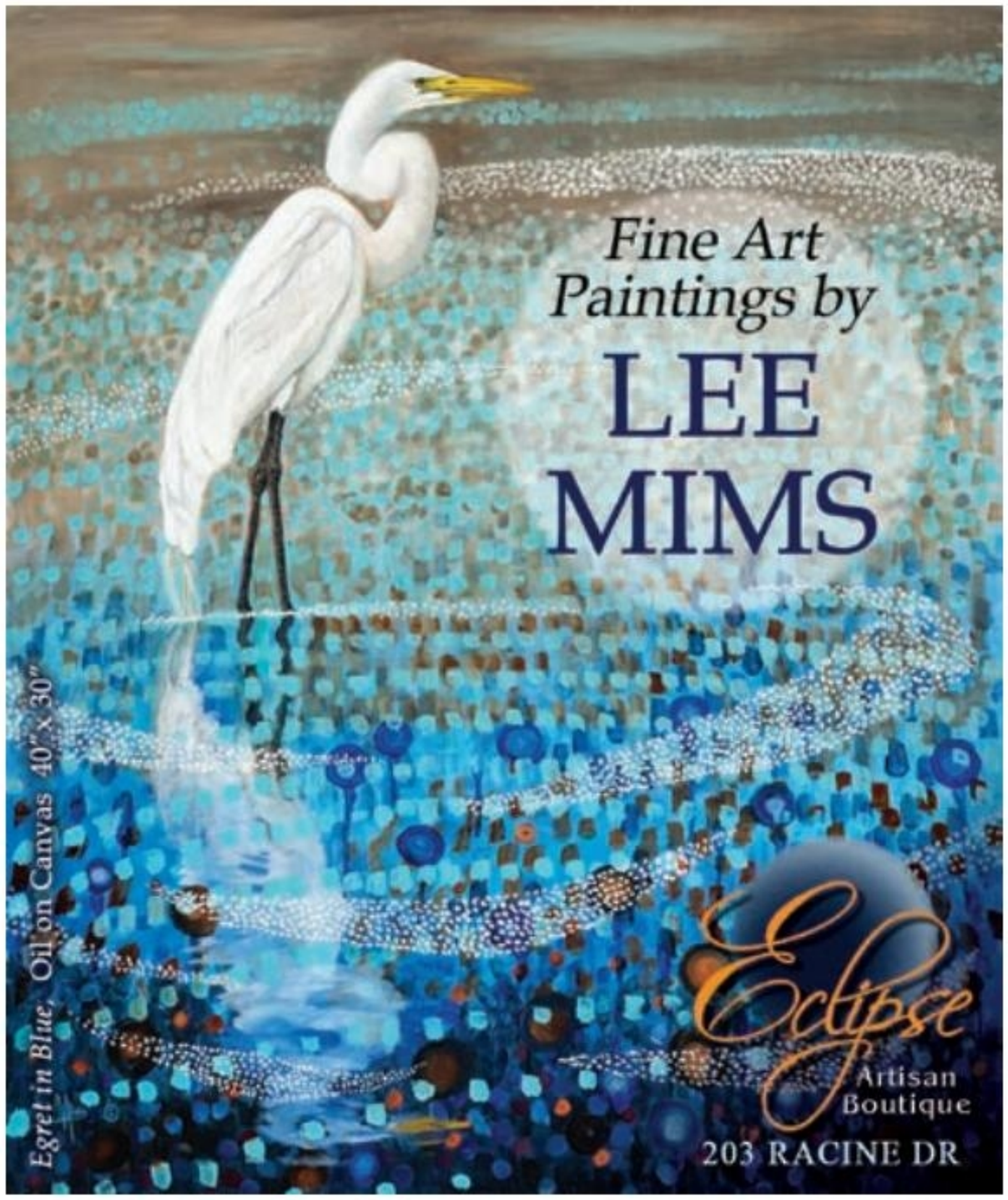
CREATE A HOME YOU LOVE

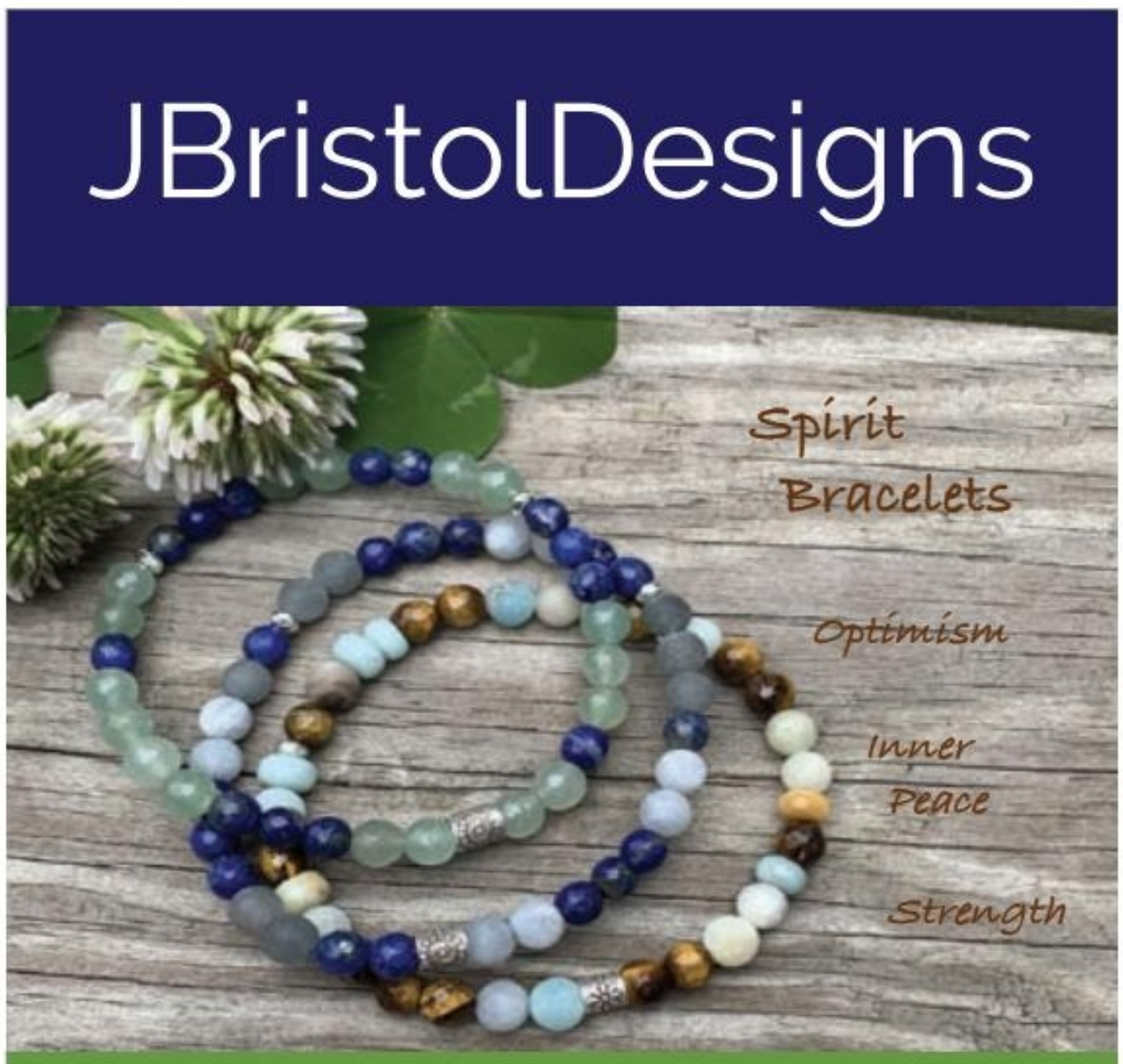
We offer high end, one of a kind furniture, rugs, lighting, art and accessories to compliment a modern coastal decor.

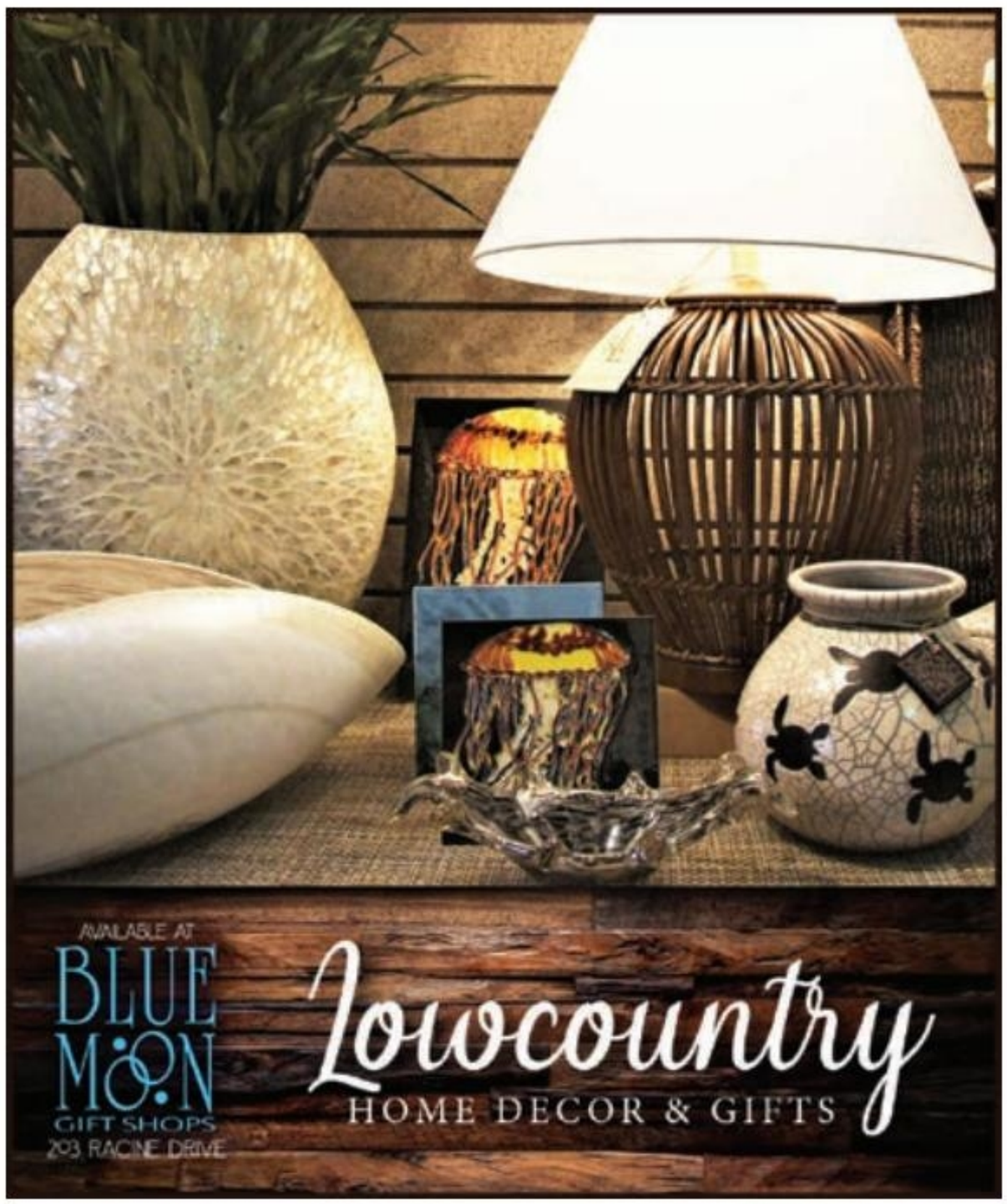
SUGARWOOD
INTERIORS

167 Porters Neck Rd. (beyond Lowe's Shopping Center)
STORE HOURS: Mon - Sat: 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
sugarwoodnc.com | 910.319.7779


The Cardinal Rules
Home & Garden Shop
WILLOW TREE®
SCULPTURES BY
SUSAN LORDI
AVAILABLE AT
BLUE MOON
GIFT SHOPS
203 RACINE DRIVE


Fine Art
Paintings by
LEE
MIMS
Egret in Blue, Oil on Canvas 40" x 30"
Eclipse
Artisan
Boutique
203 RACINE DR


JBristolDesigns
Spirit
Bracelets
Optimism
Inner
Peace
Strength
Available at
BLUE MOON
GIFT SHOPS
203 Racine Drive
Thai Hill Tribe Silver
Lapis Lazuli | Jade
Tiger's Eye
Amazonite


AVAILABLE AT
BLUE MOON
GIFT SHOPS
203 RACINE DRIVE
Lowcountry
HOME DECOR & GIFTS

2328 OCEAN POINT DRIVE
LANDFALL
$3,395,000

Exquisitely executed residence overlooking the ICWW with saltwater pool and heated spa

2032 SCRIMSHAW PLACE
LANDFALL
$1,395,000

Amazing custom home with over 6400 sq ft on the Nicklaus "Pines" golf course

243 WILLIAMS ROAD
MYRTLE GROVE
$799,000

One of a kind coastal cottage overlooking the ICWW with deeded water access

VANCE YOUNG
When Only The Best Will Do
Broker/REALTOR®
Direct: 910.232.8850

TOP PRODUCER
INTRACOASTAL REALTY

LUXURY PORTFOLIO INTERNATIONAL®

1830 REGISTER LANE

REGISTER PLACE

$2,795,000

Over 6000 sq ft overlooking the ICWW on double lot with 2 boat slips

1608 LANDFALL DRIVE

LANDFALL

$1,550,000

Resort styled family compound "Las Palmas" with two residences centered around salt water pool and cascading fountain

316 S. 3RD STREET

HISTORIC DISTRICT

$859,000

6 BR, 5 ½ BA in charming Historic downtown

Leading REAL ESTATE COMPANIES OF THE WORLD

www.vanceyoung.com

Intracoastal REALTY CORPORATION

Experience the Exceptional

Intracoastal
REALTY CORPORATION

Intracoastal Realty has been here for you and your families since 1976.

We have been through a lot together; hurricanes, recessions, and market collapses to name a few. We were there for you then, and we are here for you now.

These times are unprecedented, but so too is our market expertise and our empathetic approach to each client's situation.

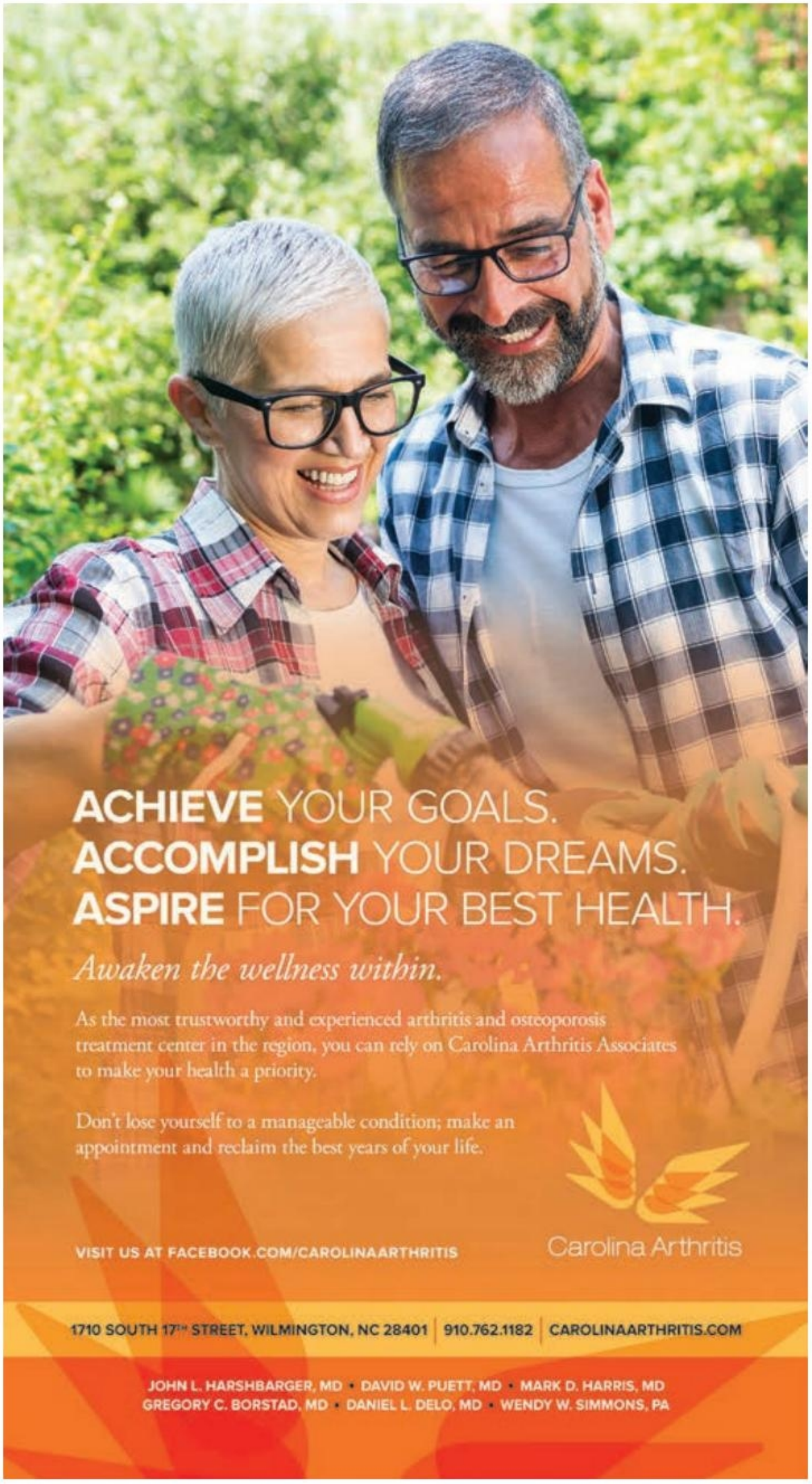
Whatever your needs – either now or in the future – you can count on Intracoastal Realty to be there for you. Just as we have been for the past 44 years.

Leading REAL ESTATE COMPANIES OF THE WORLD®

Intracoastal REALTY CORPORATION

LUXURY PORTFOLIO INTERNATIONAL®

910.256.4503 | INTRACOASTALREALTY.COM


ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS.
ACCOMPLISH YOUR DREAMS.
ASPIRE FOR YOUR BEST HEALTH.
Awaken the wellness within.
As the most trustworthy and experienced arthritis and osteoporosis treatment center in the region, you can rely on Carolina Arthritis Associates to make your health a priority.
Don't lose yourself to a manageable condition; make an appointment and reclaim the best years of your life.
VISIT US AT FACEBOOK.COM/CAROLINAARTHRITIS
Carolina Arthritis
1710 SOUTH 17TH STREET, WILMINGTON, NC 28401 | 910.762.1182 | CAROLINAARTHRITIS.COM
JOHN L. HARSHBARGER, MD • DAVID W. PUETT, MD • MARK D. HARRIS, MD
GREGORY C. BORSTAD, MD • DANIEL L. DELO, MD • WENDY W. SIMMONS, PA

Salt
MAGAZINE

VOLUME 8, NO. 4

5725 Oleander Dr., Unit B-4
Wilmington, NC 28403

David Woronoff, Publisher

Jim Dodson, Editor
jim@thepilot.com

Andie Stuart Rose, Creative Director
andie@thepilot.com

William Irvine, Senior Editor
910.833.7159
bill@saltmagazinenc.com

Alyssa Rocherolle, Associate Art Director
alyssamagazines@gmail.com

Lauren Coffey, Graphic Designer

CONTRIBUTORS

Ash Alder, Harry Blair, Susan Campbell, Wiley Cash, Clyde Edgerton, Chris Fonvielle, Jason Frye, Nan Graham, Virginia Holman, Mark Holmberg, Sara King, D. G. Martin, Kevin Maurer, Mary Novitsky, Dana Sachs, Stephen E. Smith, Annie Gray Sprunt, Astrid Stellanova, Bill Thompson

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Mallory Cash, Rick Ricozzi, Bill Ritenour, Andrew Sherman, Mark Steelman

ADVERTISING SALES

Ginny Trigg, Advertising Director
910.693.2481 · ginny@saltmagazinenc.com

Elise Mullaney, Advertising Manager
910.409.5502 · elise@saltmagazinenc.com

Courtney Barden, Advertising Representative
910.262.1882 · courtney@saltmagazinenc.com

Brad Beard, Graphic Designer
bradatthepilot@gmail.com

Darlene Stark, Circulation Director 910.693.2488

Steve Anderson, Finance Director 910.693.2497

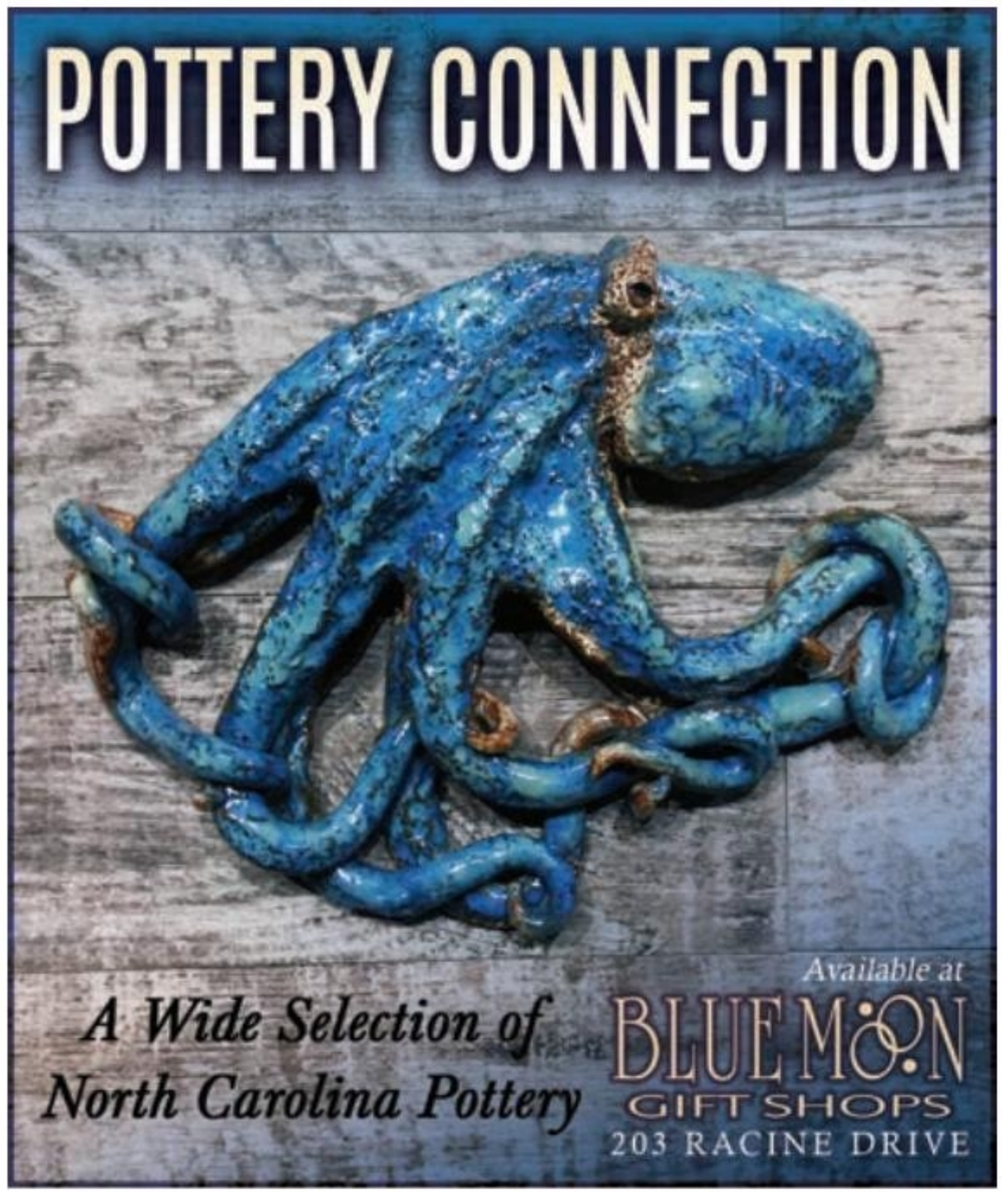
OWNERS
Jack Andrews, Frank Daniels Jr., Frank Daniels III, Lee Dirks, David Woronoff

©Copyright 2020. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. Salt *Magazine is published by* The Pilot LLC

Nancy DiTocco McCarthy
SEAGLASS JEWELRY
Meet the Artist for Custom orders!
HANDCRAFTED SEAGLASS, PEARL AND FINE SILVER JEWELRY
AVAILABLE AT
BLUE MOON
GIFT SHOPS
203 RACINE DRIVE

Class Of 2020
AVAILABLE AT
BLUE MOON
GIFT SHOPS
203 RACINE DRIVE
polished
HOME DECOR, TABLE TOP AND GIFTS

FRONT STREET BABY
paty
AVAILABLE AT
BLUE MOON
GIFT SHOPS
203 RACINE DRIVE
ORGANIC APPAREL
Gifts & More


POTTERY CONNECTION
A Wide Selection of North Carolina Pottery
Available at
BLUE MOON
GIFT SHOPS
203 RACINE DRIVE

May/June 2020

Departments

11 Simple Life
By Jim Dodson

15 SaltWorks

19 Omnivorous Reader
By Stephen E. Smith

23 The Conversation
By Dana Sachs

26 Salty Words
By Nicholas A. White

28 Food for Thought
By Jane Lear

31 Annie Gray's Diary
By Annie Gray Sprunt

32 Taking the Cure
By Nan Graham

35 Birdwatch
By Susan Campbell

62 Accidental Astrologer
By Astrid Stellanova

63 Almanac
By Ash Alder

64 Papadaddy's Mindfield
By Clyde Edgerton

Features

37 Nineteen Fourty Four
(dancing the foxtrot)
Poetry by Raymond Whitaker

38 Gallery
Hank Carter

44 A Tender Trap
By Kevin Maurer
A tight-knit group of Venus flytrap poachers find easy targets in local game lands, gardens and nurseries

48 Down the River, To the Sea
By John Wolfe
Where science meets the spirit

52 Howl of the Wild
By Virginia Holman
Coastal coyotes are now just part of the neighborhood

56 Dreamers Welcome
By William Irvine
Behind the proper facade of a dignified Queen Anne house lies a secret: a chic and comfortable boutique inn

COVER PHOTOGRAPH AND PHOTOGRAPH THIS PAGE BY HANK CARTER

Everything tastes better with...

Salt

MAGAZINE

saltmagazinenc.com

PAWS & CLAWS

ANIMAL HOSPITAL, P.C.

Dr. Sam Smith
Dr. Stephen Anderson
Dr. Natalie-Anne Reinhart
Dr. Carrie MaGrann

Practicing in Preventive & Internal Medicine,
Advanced Dentistry and Surgery for
Cats, Dogs and Exotics

"Devoted Vets for Beloved Pets"

202 Giles Ave, Wilmington NC 28403 | 910.399.3768
info@pawsclawsah.com | www.pawsclawsah.com

THE DIGGS

AT PAWS & CLAWS

210 Giles Ave, Wilmington NC 28403 | 910.408.2955

Alexander Koonce

910•509•1949 | cell: 910•233•7225 | 800•533•1840
www.alexanderkoonce.com

Intracoastal REALTY CORPORATION
Experience the Exceptional

TOP PRODUCER
INTRACOASTAL REALTY

2814 Shandy Avenue

Parkshore Estates

Conveniently located off of Greenville Loop in the active, family neighborhood of Parkshore Estates. The large, low country style front porch welcomes you into this spacious 4 bed, 2 & a half bath home. Downstairs features open living areas, hardwood flooring, a large kitchen with plenty of room to gather, opens to an oversized breakfast area & huge pantry! Convenient first floor master is quite spacious with a sitting room & en-suite with high counters, whirlpool tub, separate tiled shower & walk in closet. Upstairs offers 3 large bedrooms each with walk-in closets. One of which includes a large sunporch overlooking the backyard. The lush gardens provide year-round fragrance & frame the picturesque setting for this lovely home. **$599,900**

7906 Pawleys Lane

Marsh Oaks

Beautifully maintained home in move in condition. The open floor plan lends perfectly to entertaining or being in the mist of family. The private study/office with custom built in bookcases is perfect for a home office or adult retreat. The large FROG is perfect for a 4th bedroom for a teen or a mancave. The large screened back porch overlooks the fenced, private yard with manicured landscaping and a large patio that is perfect for a grill, firepit, or more. Hardwood floors throughout entire main floor, tiled baths, custom closets and kitchen cabinets, crown molding, and mature landscaping are just a few of the many upgrades this home offers.
$348,500

Water & Marsh Front Lots at Marsh Oaks

Isn't it time to love where you live? Enjoy a privileged view of wide open spaces and nature in your backyard. Call today for the best selection of prime, water and marsh-front lots with exceptional new pricing! Located in the very sought after neighborhood of Marsh Oaks! Gorgeous community with award winning amenities that includes clubhouse, pool, tennis courts, playground and common areas. Every sunset will remind you of how much you love your best investment. Lot sizes from half of an acre all the way up to an one and a half acres!

Waterfront lots ½ - 1 ½ acre now $310,000- $349,900. Non-waterfront lots start at $89,900

Marsh Oaks

EXPECT ROYAL TREATMENT
www.alexanderkoonce.com

1900 Eastwood Road • Suite 38 Lumina Station • Wilmington, NC 28403
zander@alexanderkoonce.com

Simple Small Places

And how they produce some of life's greatest moments

By Jim Dodson

Marcus Tullius Cicero, the famous Roman philosopher and statesman, once observed that all he needed to live was a good library and his garden. I'm beginning to know what he was talking about.

In a world where life as we knew it outside home has largely come to a standstill, familiar people and places that provide a measure of comfort and sense of normality are more important than ever.

In my own narrowed sphere, I am fortunate to have a home library and garden where I can find useful diversion, fresh perspective and life more or less unchanged. As any reader knows, a good library can transport you anywhere in the world you'd care to go without leaving your comfortable armchair. And a garden keeps on growing regardless of the day's news.

Before it became a library, the small room that leads to the large screened porch out back was where our house's previous owner, Mama Meryl Corry, spent most of her days during the final years of her life. Her late husband, Al, was a larger-than-life character and a gifted contractor who built a number of the first houses in our postwar neighborhood, including, in 1951, his own dream house for Meryl and their four children. It's a cozy brick-and-wood bungalow that looks more like the private retreat of a Hollywood starlet than a Carolina housewife and mother.

In fact, Mama Meryl was both — at least in the opinion of a kid who grew up two doors from the Corrys but was always in and out of their house with their two youngest sons, Craig and Britt.At a time when preteen boys begin to notice such things, Craig Corry and I maintained that we had the best-looking moms in the neighborhood. Meryl was a statuesque beauty with flowing auburn hair who looked a lot like filmdom's leading lady Maureen O'Hara. My mom was diminutive and blond, a former beauty queen from Maryland who could have been Doris Day's kid sister. Not surprisingly they were best friends, their alliance forged by the noisy abundance of boys underfoot.

Several years ago, as if by the sweet hand of Providence, Mama Meryl passed on and the Corrys reluctantly placed their family home on the market, just as my wife, Wendy, and I happened along in search of our own perfect house in which to grow old. We purchased the place within a week. The Corrys were delighted. To this day, you could never convince me that Mama Meryl and Big Al, wherever they relocated, didn't have some say in the matter.

During the first two years we were updating and renovating rooms, the one space that proved to be a puzzlement was the small room with a fireplace that connected the dining room to the large screened porch in back — the same room where Mama Meryl spent most of her time after Al was gone. From oldest son, Chris, I learned that the space was originally an outdoor patio with a fireplace — another California touch. Al enclosed it for a cozy reading room featuring an entry door at the rear of the carport, allowing easier access and a good view of the arriving postman.

Sometime during our second spring in the house, as I turned my attention to tearing apart and rebuilding Mama Meryl's overgrown gardens, it suddenly hit me that the room was ideal for a home library like the one I had for two decades in Maine.

Earlier this year, we completed work on the library, providing space for 500 or so books in custom-built maple bookcases, with new gallery lighting, original artwork, vintage rugs, a handsome antique walnut writing table and five comfortable chairs suitable for any and all sort of visitors, including spirits.

In ancient times and in every culture, libraries and gardens were considered sacred places that nurtured the human spirit. The Great Library of Alexandria in Egypt was considered the spiritual wonder of the world, housing the writings of Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, and many others — until, after years of decay, Julius Caesar was blamed for burning it down. Jesus spent his last night on Earth praying in a garden and, of course, Adam and Eve were reportedly invited to leave one dressed in fig leaves for violating property rules.

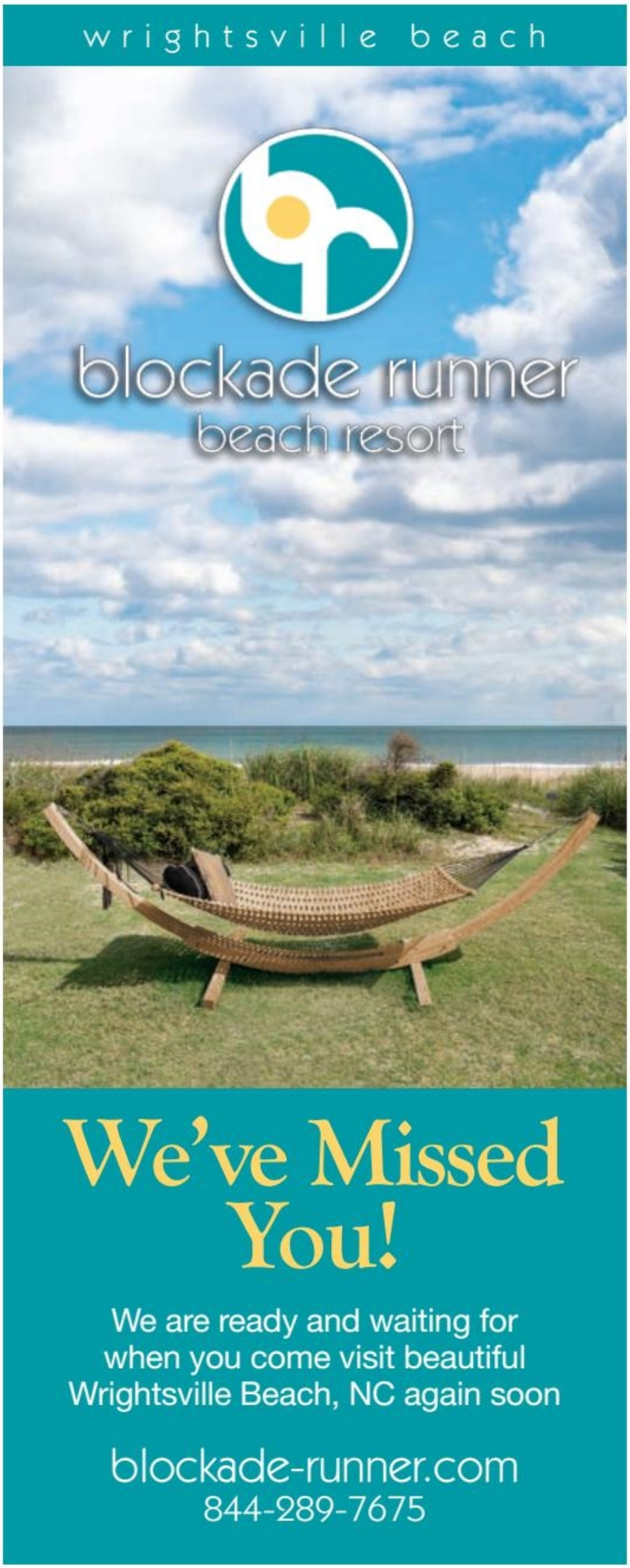
I'm pretty sure Mama Meryl approves of how I've updated her garden and reading room, evidenced by the fact that I can almost feel her presence in both places.

With nobody but the dogs and me likely to occupy my library's armchairs for the foreseeable future, I've lately taken to inviting the spirits of well-loved authors who anchor my bookshelves to come sit for a spell in a chair of their choosing.

As Mama Meryl hovers approvingly, methinks Walker Percy prefers the houndstooth club chair while — naturally — Joseph Campbell fancies the mythic oak chair with Egyptian carved heads. Mary Oliver lounges in the elegant red Deacons chair where Annie Dillard often sits, and the big comfy wicker number is rightly claimed by my friend Elwyn Brooks White, whose iconic children's books (*Stuart Little*, *Charlotte's Web*) and collections of essays shaped my views on life and writing from age 6 onward. They inspired me to chase a career in which I've wound up eating my own words — or at least living off them.

At times like these, E.B. White's Pulitzer Prize-winning essays, letters and other works have traveled with me since the year I graduated college, and are a tonic for the captive soul.

Particularly endearing is his essay, "Death of a Pig," which details the author's struggles to save an ailing pig and make peace with his own grief.After burying his pig beneath a wild apple tree with his rambunctious dog Fred in attendance, White confides: "I have written this account in penitence and grief, as a man who failed to raise his pig . . . The grave in the woods is unmarked, but Fred can direct the



mourner to it unerringly and with immense good will, and I know he and I shall often revisit it, singly and together, in seasons of reflection and despair, on flagless memorial days of our own choosing."

White and his wife, Katherine, lived on a saltwater farm in North Brooklin, Maine, an hour or so up the road from where my first wife and I lived after we married in 1985 — four days after my favorite author passed away.

I never got to meet him, though an unlikely connection unexpectedly came my way through the garden.

Upon learning that Wendy and I planned to move home to North Carolina in the winter of 2007, an elderly friend who claimed to be friendly with Katherine White gave me a remarkable going away gift — a clump of white Italian coneflowers she claimed originated in the garden of Katherine White.

Remarkably, the flowers made it through a succession of long-distance moves and careful transplantings, faithfully returning spring after spring for more than a decade.

Ironically, our last move home to the Corry house proved to be the undoing of my well-traveled coneflowers. Perhaps their uprooting in late summer and the idea of making it to another spring was simply too much for them to contemplate.

In any case, I think about those coneflowers from time to time, usually when I'm resting with a cool beverage in an old wooden chair after a day of work in the garden, my other sacred sanctuary in the time of coronavirus.

From the depths of that old chair, I find it reassuring to study the stars before dawn and while the birds of late afternoon are dive-bombing the feeders as the last light falls like a benediction over the yard.

Certain questions, for the moment at least, remain unanswered. For example, I shall probably never know if those handsome white coneflowers really came from Katherine White's garden, though I like to think that they did. Their message is clear.

"To live in this world," advises my friend the poet Mary Oliver from her grand red chair in the library, "you must be able to do three things. To love what is mortal; to hold it against your bones knowing your own life depends upon it; and when it comes time to let it go, to let it go."

Mama Meryl knew this. I suppose I'm finally learning it, too.

Someday this house will pass into other hands and the books of my fine home library will be boxed up and donated to the annual church auction or carted off to the community book sale.

Likewise, without me around to keep it trimmed and tidy, my garden will likely overrun its borders and spread into places it was never meant to go, a disordered Eden that may prompt the new homeowner to hack it down without a trace.

But for now, like long-gone Cicero before me, these are the simple small places where I seek and find whatever there is for present comfort during these flagless memorial days — from books that still let me roam the world to a garden where, I noticed just yesterday, the bluebirds have returned for the third year in a row to start a new family — a sign that life always begins again.

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

Cameron Art Museum

Art brings us together, no matter the distance.
CAM sends hope and comfort to our community.

Visit us at
CameronArtMuseum.org
#ConnectwithCAM

@Cameron Art Museum
@camartmuseum
@CamArtMuseum
Cameron Art Museum

Image: Artist Unknown, *Slave-made Quilt (Tulip Design)*, c. 1850, Cotton, Cameron Art Museum: Gift of Mildred and James Guthrie, 2005.1

6825 Mayfaire Club Drive

Unit #304 - Village at Mayfaire

$364,900

3 BEDROOMS / 2 FULL BATHS
1,593 SQFT.

Move in ready, this third floor condominium offers countless amenities and a large private balcony

7919 Reunion Road

Laurel Lea - Wilmington

$475,000

3 BEDROOMS / 3 FULL BATHS
2,088 SQFT.

Charleston-style pristine home overlooking a 7-acre natural lake in unique idyllic Laurel Lea

6229 Richard Bradley Drive

Bradley Hills

$850,000

5 BEDROOMS / 3 FULL BATHS / 1 HALF BATH
4,089 SQFT.

Located on a quiet cul de sac off Greenville Loop, this beautifully maintained home with no HOA is minutes from Wrightsville Beach and Mayfaire

Let the *Michelle Clark Team* help you discover your perfect neighborhood.

You and your home are in the best possible hands when you choose the Michelle Clark Team. Whether you're buying or selling a house, our staff has the local and industry knowledge to find the best location for you and your loved ones.

Michelle Clark | Realtor®/ Broker | ALHS, SFR, SRES

MICHELLE CLARK
A name you can lean on

Intracoastal REALTY CORPORATION
Experience the Exceptional

Contact our agency today and make ***a friend for life.***

910.367.9767 | MCLARK@INTRACOASTALREALTY.COM | *michelleclarkteam.com*

saltworks

In the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, many sites dropped their paywalls to allow unrestricted access. This likely won't last forever, so don't be surprised if the viewing at some of the destinations listed on these pages now comes with a price tag.

Old-Home Shopping Network

Legacy Architectural Salvage is the place to go for great finds — windows, doors, decor, flooring and other elements from old buildings. Now a curated selection of the contents of their warehouse can be shopped online, with all items available for curbside pickup. Recent online finds: antique barn doors ($95), 1890s old-growth pine mantelpiece ($175), and an 1840s antique gristmill wheel ($300). All purchases are credit card only. historicwilmington.org/legacy-online/.

Virtual CAM

Attention, homebound art lovers: The Cameron Art Museum is offering several virtual exhibitions on its website. "Stories in Print" features a variety of examples of printmaking from the collections, with works by Mary Cassatt, Romare Bearden and Robert Gwathmey, among others. "Elizabeth Bradford: A House of One Room" includes masterful paintings inspired by the artist's journeys to state and national parks. "Structure in Space and Time — Photography of Phil Freelon" presents works that explore the interrelation between architecture and nature in the landscape. cameronartmuseum.org.

Elizabeth Bradford

Tar Heel History at Home

The North Carolina Museum of History's History at Home web page offers a bumper crop of virtual exhibitions, profiles in North Carolina's African-American history, podcasts and a search engine to explore objects in the permanent collection. A great resource for the armchair historian. ncmuseumofhistory.org/history-at-home/.

America in Bloom

There has never been a better time to go outside and explore the natural splendor at our doorstep. America in Bloom, a national nonprofit organization, is devoted to spreading the gospel of the positive benefits of flowers, plants and trees in the environment: They add to our oxygen supply, create pride of place, and increase mental and physical health. The group's website offers an impressive compendium of resources about flowers and plants. americainbloom.org.

A Burger Done Right

By Jason Frye

Over the course of one week, the azaleas in my yard budded, bloomed and fell back to their deep summer green, sending up shoots here and there that begged me to grab some pruners and shape things up. I would, but I've been too busy. See, I spend a good portion of my day thinking about food. This has only gotten worse, since every bite I've eaten has come from my own kitchen as of late.

I think about Cap'n Crunch and Khmer noodles, *salade Lyonnais* and slice-and-bake-cookies, my mother-in-law's pancakes and this exquisite margarita I once had at the Kentucky Club in Juarez. And a cone of salty frites and juicy, juicy burgers. Especially burgers.

Like I said, I spend a lot of time thinking about food. For the most part, these thoughts come and go like the azalea blooms — here, then gone — but this burger thing, it stuck. I found myself fantasizing about one of the piled-so-high-it-might-topple, seared-on-the-flat-top, cheesy, toasty-bun miracles that is the Fork n Cork burger.

Which burger? Doesn't matter. The thought of every one of them set my mouth to watering, so I texted James Smith, burgermeister and mastermind behind the Fork n Cork, for some advice. After all, between two Forks — Downtown and the soon-to-open Carolina Beach location — Smoke on the Water, and Bone & Bean BBQ, Smith's flipped a few thousand patties. If anyone in this town could help silence my growling stomach and create the at-home version of my favorite burger, he was my guy.

"The best burger is simple," Smith said, when I got him on the phone. "Be liberal with the salt and pepper — and I mean *liberal*. Salt everything — the meat, the tomatoes and onions and whatever toppings — because it really helps wake up the flavors."

Salt. Check.

"Toast your bun. A brioche roll is best, the eggy-ness and the light sweetness are a good contrast to the salt and fat of the burger and cheese. If you can't do brioche, try a potato roll; it's a great substitute. Still gotta toast it, though."

Buns. Check.

Sort of. With store shelves running a little thin, all I could find were tiny brioche buns (fit only for a slider, and a child-size burger wasn't going to put a dent in my growing hunger), and potato rolls were nowhere to be found, so I made due with a simple knot roll.

"And meat. It has to be high quality and it has to be ground fresh. Period. No frozen meat, no premade patties, fresh only. At the restaurant, we use a custom blend from the Veggie Wagon, but that blend's a secret I'll never tell."

High-quality meat. Check. Custom blend. No check. I opted for freshly ground Certified Angus Beef — available from Pine Valley Market and Lowes Foods — for my patties.

The Fork n Cork serves whopping half-pound burgers, so I followed suit with two hefty patties, each one seasoned with plenty of salt, white pepper and freshly cracked black pepper.

I don't have a flat top at home, so I did the next best thing: built a fire in my Weber and waited. When the grill was ready, I dropped the patties and heard that satisfying sizzle and the first drips of fat onto the coals. I closed the lid and got to work on the rest of the meal.

Slice and salt the tomatoes; set aside. Make a Negroni. Get the fries in the oven. Flip the burgers. Finish the first Negroni and make a second. Pick some lettuce. Slip a slice of cheese on each burger, sip my Negroni and watch the cheese melt. Pull the burgers and assemble.

I took the first bite and everything — the juicy meat, the melty cheese, the salty slices of tomato, the smear of Duke's mayo, the fresh lettuce — stood up and announced itself. This burger was everything. I focused on each bite, planning my next as I savored the one I'd just taken. I forgot about my fries. I forgot about my drink. I forgot about my wife, for whom I'd made the second burger, but eventually her voice pulled me from my gastronomic glee.

"Thought I lost you there," she said.

"You did. This burger . . ." I said around a mouthful of food.

We both nodded. And chewed. And took another bite. It was no Fork n Cork, but it was damn fine all the same.

Still, I can't wait to see James and get a burger done right.

Jason Frye daydreams about food from his home in Wilmington. Check out what he's cooking, eating and drinking, and where he's traveling on Instagram, where he's known as @beardedwriter.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JASON FRYE

Giorgi's Poem

Fred Flynn (above) has been the spirits director and head barman at the acclaimed Wilmington restaurant manna since early 2019.

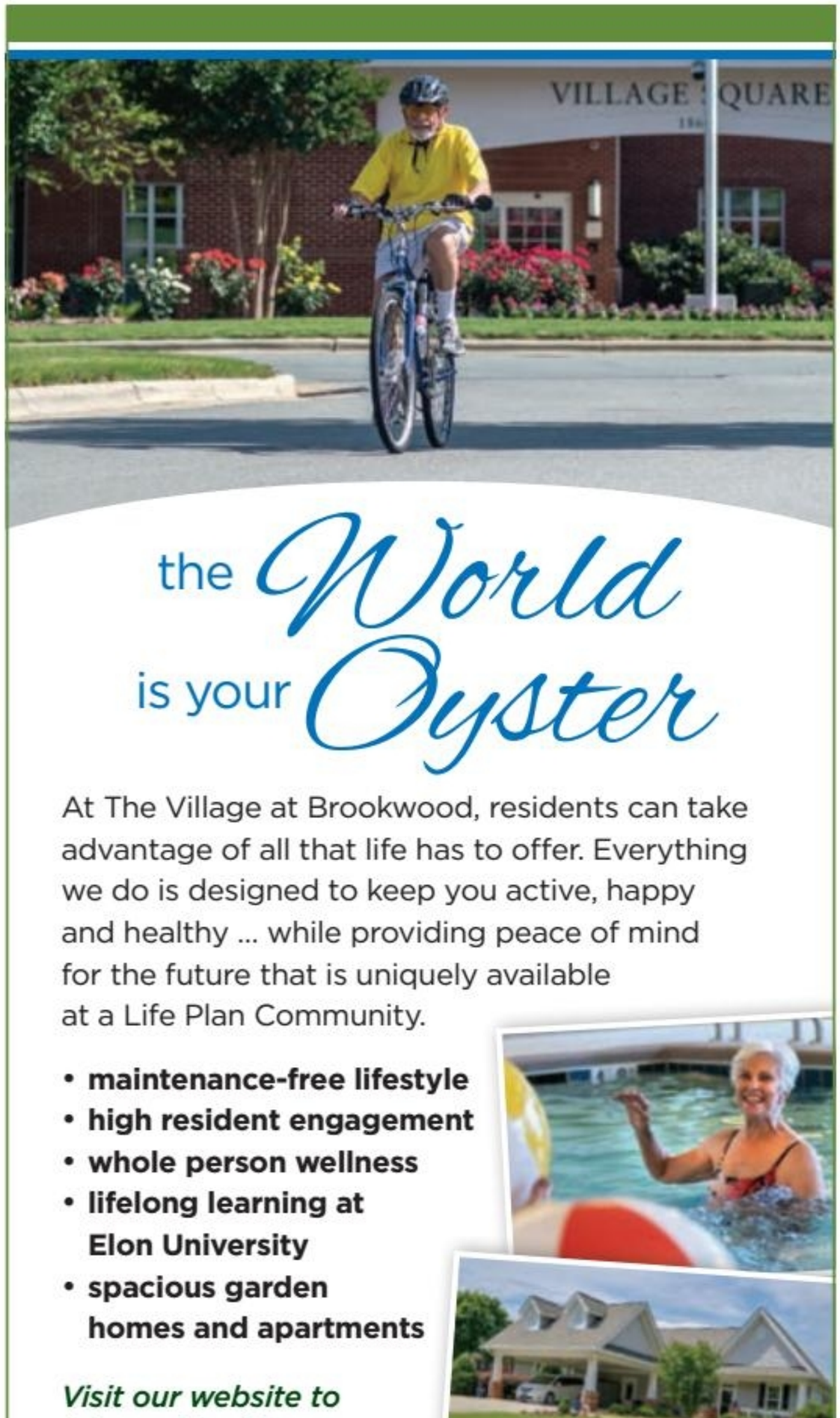
His creation for late spring is a drink he calls Giorgi's Poem: "I love the smokiness and acidity of this drink. It's very playful and keeps your tongue on its toes."

Giorgi's Poem:

1.5 ounces Sombra mezcal
.75 ounce Luxardo Cherry liqueur
.75 ounce Yellow Chartreuse
.5 ounce fresh lime juice

Stir all ingredients over rocks, then strain into a coupe or martini glass and serve with a charred lime wheel.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW SHERMAN



the World is your Oyster

At The Village at Brookwood, residents can take advantage of all that life has to offer. Everything we do is designed to keep you active, happy and healthy ... while providing peace of mind for the future that is uniquely available at a Life Plan Community.

- **maintenance-free lifestyle**
- **high resident engagement**
- **whole person wellness**
- **lifelong learning at Elon University**
- **spacious garden homes and apartments**

Visit our website to take a virtual tour, view photos, or watch brief videos featuring our residents.

The VILLAGE AT BROOKWOOD

1860 Brookwood Ave. | Burlington

Proud to be a part of CONE HEALTH The Network for Exceptional Care

Managed by The Well-Spring Group

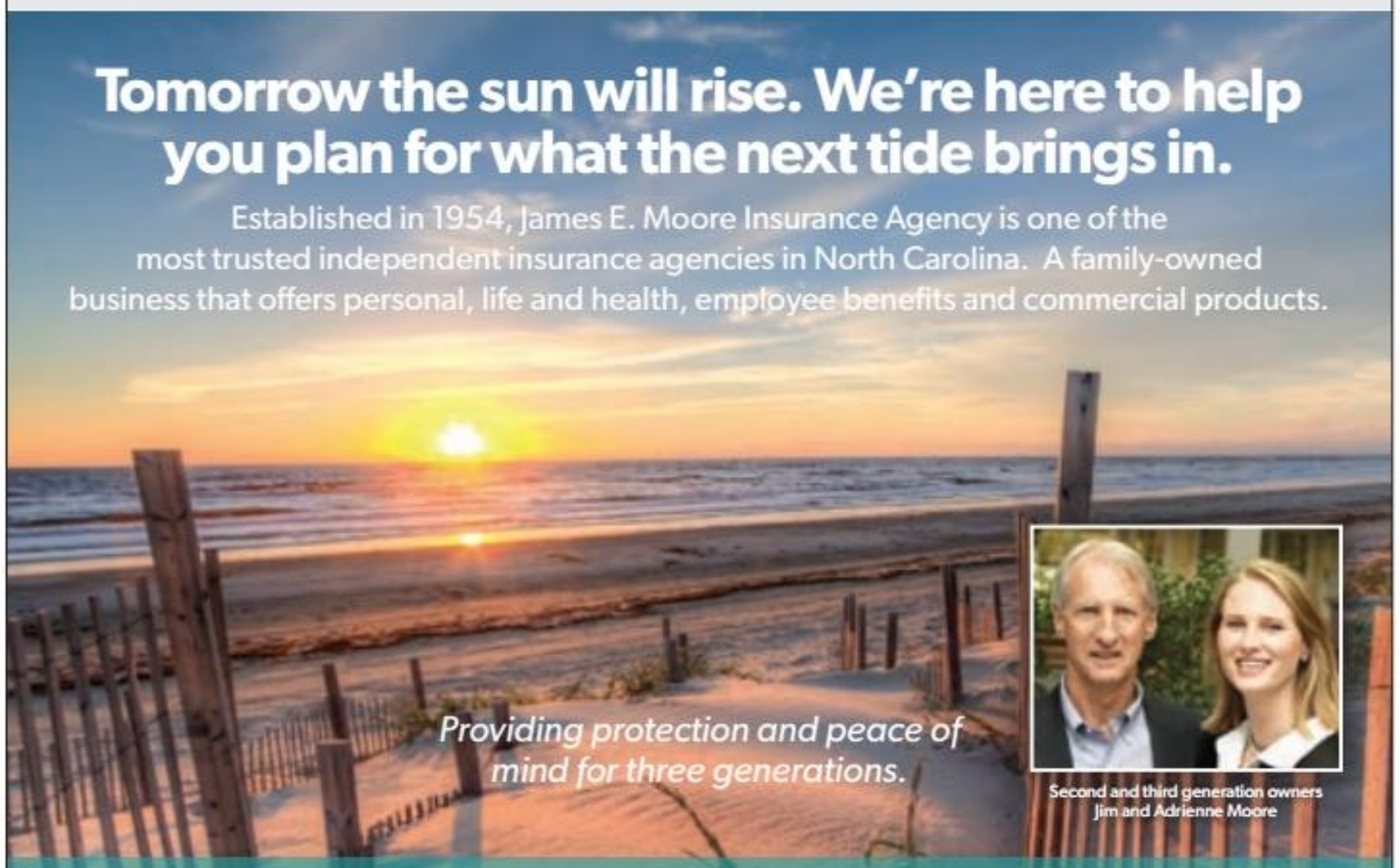
800-282-2053 | VillageAtBrookwood.org

JAMES E. MOORE
INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.

Since 1954

Tomorrow the sun will rise. We're here to help you plan for what the next tide brings in.

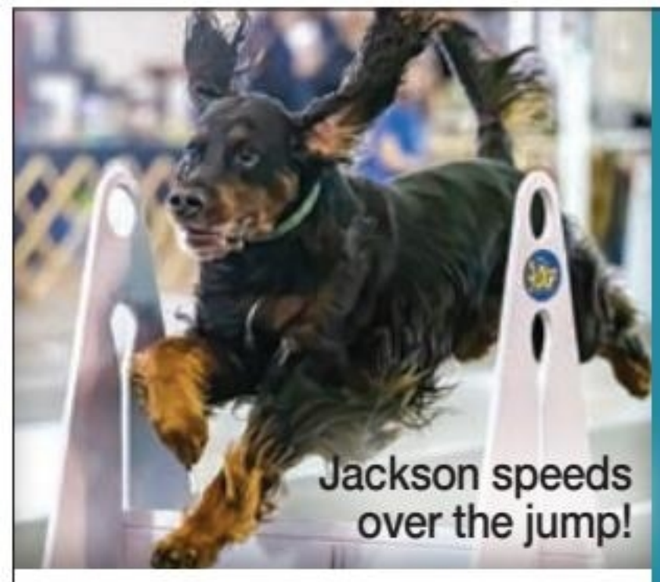
Established in 1954, James E. Moore Insurance Agency is one of the most trusted independent insurance agencies in North Carolina. A family-owned business that offers personal, life and health, employee benefits and commercial products.



Providing protection and peace of mind for three generations.

Second and third generation owners Jim and Adrienne Moore

1508 MILITARY CUTOFF RD, STE. 104 • WILMINGTON, NC 28403
WWW.JAMESEMOORE.COM • 910.256.5333



Jackson speeds over the jump!

GALLIGAN CHIROPRACTIC

For PETS and People TOO!

Dr. Gail Galligan, BA, DC, AVCA

Inducted into Animal Chiropractic Hall of Fame in 2015

1221 Floral Pkwy #103 • Wilmington, NC 28403
910.790.4575 • galliganchiropractic.com

AVCA
AMERICAN VETERINARY CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION
Recognized as the World Leader in Animal Chiropractic

Even in uncertain times feel secure knowing your financial plan remains the same.

ONST is here to protect your future and the legacy for your loved ones.

OLD NORTH STATE TRUST
GREENSBORO | WILMINGTON| GREENVILLE | LEXINGTON
336-646-6678 | oldnorthstatetrust.com

YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE
for buying and selling coins, currency, silver & gold.

ESTATES, BULLION & INVESTMENT GRADE COINS

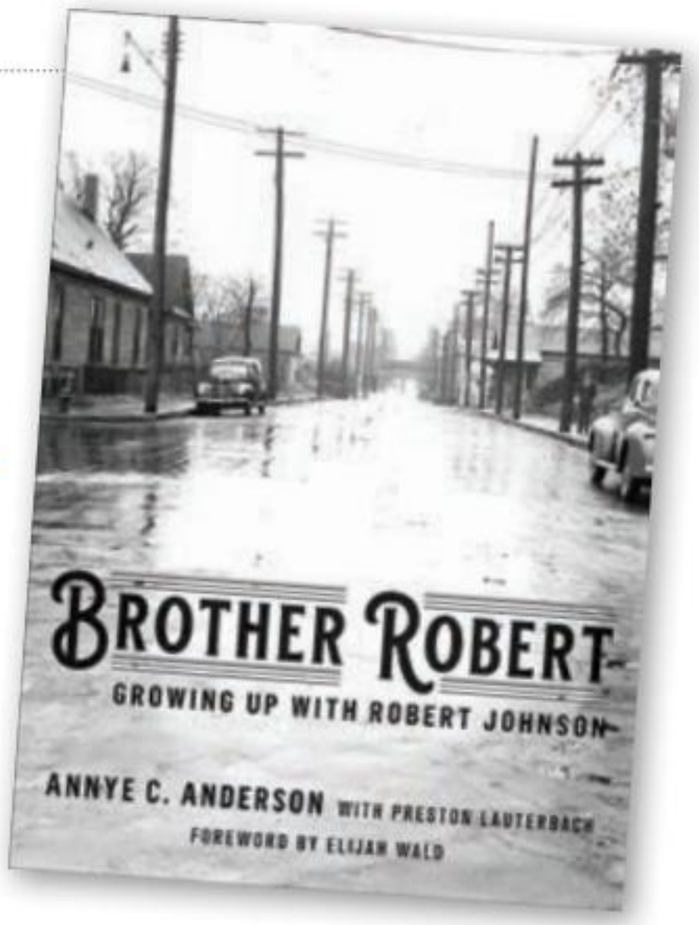
JOSH BOBBITT
MIKE SAMASKEAWICZ
RICK GREENE
ANA, NCNA, NGC, PCGS
HERITAGE AUCTIONS AFFILIATE
65 YEARS COMBINED EXPERIENCE

THE COIN·MARKET
SINCE 2001

4710-B MARKET ST. | WILMINGTON
TUE.-FRI. 9:30AM-5:00PM · SAT. 9:30AM-2:00PM
910.784.9191

The Delta Blues Legend Nobody Knew

A new biography of Robert Johnson comes alive with anecdotal details



BY STEPHEN E. SMITH

Biographers, musicologists and blues aficionados who've attempted to research the life and times of bluesman Robert Johnson have faced a daunting challenge: Not much is known about the elusive Johnson, who was born out of wedlock in Hazelhurst, Mississippi, in 1911, and whose lifeless body was found 27 years later in a ditch outside Greenwood.

All that remains of Johnson are a couple of photographs — and they don't tell us much about his life — and a death certificate that lists only the date of his demise (Aug. 16, 1938) and the location of the body when it was found. And, of course, there are the 29 classic recordings, including 12 outtakes, of Johnson's playing and singing what would eventually transform the man in a pinstripe suit holding a Gibson L-1 guitar into the definitive bluesman whose Delta style influenced a generation of guitar heroes.

Those are the available facts. The heart of the Robert Johnson legend, the details of how he lived and the appalling circumstances surrounding his death, are based on speculation, hearsay, rumor and outright invention, and despite a plethora of books, a feature film and a documentary or two, there's been little primary source material available until the publication of *Brother Robert: Growing Up with Robert Johnson*, by Annye C. Anderson with Preston Lauterbach.

Annye Anderson is Johnson's stepsister. She considers Robert "family," although they weren't blood relatives and were linked only by a convoluted mixing of broken relationships and communal living arrangements. Still, she managed to spend time with the great bluesman through her preteens, and she willingly supplies anecdotal details and insights into his life and personal habits. She also retells stories that were passed down to her from her extended family.

Given the dearth of information surrounding Johnson's life, Anderson's testimony is a welcome addition to the historical record, but the serious reader must be willing to take Anderson's recollections at face value. Although there's a chance of falling victim to a hoax, there's no reason to believe that Anderson isn't who she says she is. She supplies a summary of family relationships that link her to Johnson, and her intimate knowledge of the time and place in which Johnson lived is convincing enough. It's reasonable to assume, or at least to hope, that Anderson's collaborator, Preston Lauterbach, the author of three previous blues-related volumes, and the publisher, Hachette Books, have done their homework.

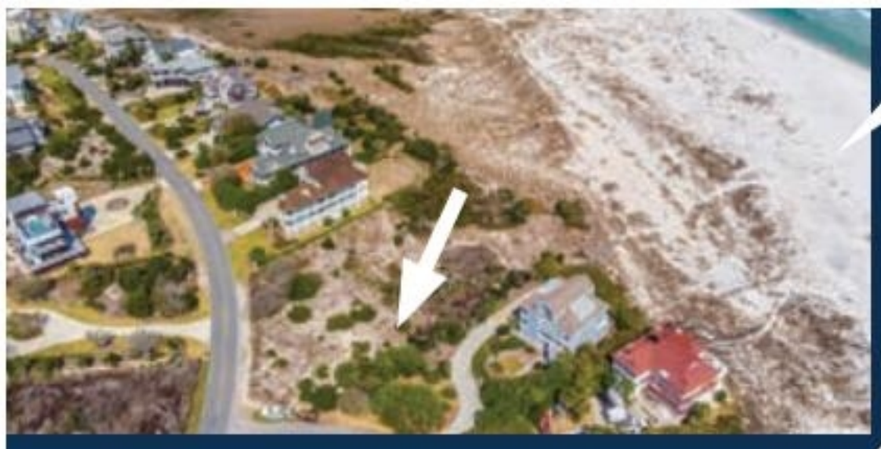
Anderson's stated purpose is to "set the record straight." Readers learn about Johnson's daily routine in Memphis and details of his hoboing, his love life, his favorite foods, his preferred tobacco, and the divergent sources of his music.

Given the time and social circumstances in which he lived, Johnson was aesthetically middlebrow. "I know his (Brother Robert's) repertoire pretty well," Anderson writes. "He was blues, he was folk, he was country. Jimmie Rodgers was his favorite, and he became my favorite. Brother Robert could yodel just like he did. We did 'Waiting for a Train,' together. . . . And you name it. All the Irish songs he did, because in the South they used to sing lots of those songs: 'Annie Laurie,' 'My Bonnie,' and 'Auld Lang Syne.'" Like many bluesmen of the period, Johnson played at juke joints, in parks, at rent parties and dances, and on street corners and front porches, but never achieved national recognition during his lifetime.

Typical of Anderson's recollections is Johnson's last visit at a family gathering on the evening of the Joe Louis-Max Schmeling fight. Johnson, guitar in hand, was decked out in a white sharkskin suit, Panama hat and patent leather shoes. "He was razor sharp when he dressed," Anderson recalls. "He (Johnson) did 'Terraplane (Blues),' 'Sweet Home Chicago,' 'Kind Hearted Woman,' he and Son (Johnson's half-brother) did '44 Blues'. . . . That night of the big fight was the last time I saw him."

Johnson died not long after the Louis-Schmeling bout. "Everyone was in shock," she writes. "He was dead two weeks before we knew. . . . We weren't going to sing Jimmie Rogers together ever again, or sing 'John Henry' together anymore."

The second half of Anderson's memoir is a predictable tale of music-biz skulduggery. Johnson's recordings went unappreciated until



10 INLET HOOK
$1,800,000

419 BEACH ROAD
NORTH • $2,190,000

188 BEACH ROAD
SOUTH • $5,500,000

29 PIPERS NECK
$2,675,000

FIGURE EIGHT ISLAND

FIGURE EIGHT REALTY

A Private Beach Community

Sales & Rentals

Judy B. Parlatore • *Owner/Broker/* REALTOR® • judy@figure8island.com

Jo El Skipper • *Broker/* REALTOR® • jo-el@figure8island.com

Kirra Sutton • *Broker/* REALTOR® • kirra@figure8island.com

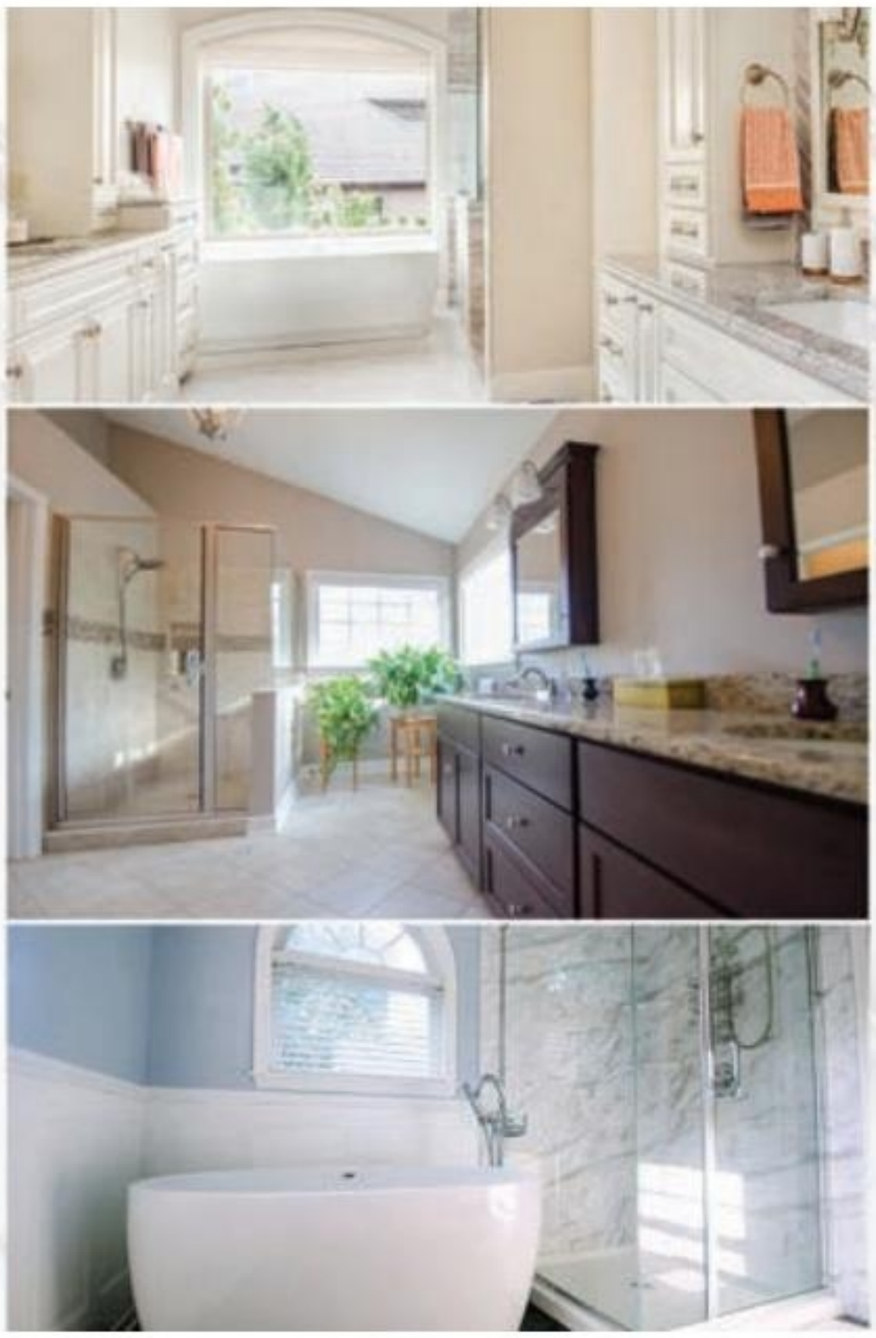
Toll free: (800) 279.6085 Local: (910) 686.4400 15 Bridge Road, Wilmington, NC 28411 www.figure8island.com

$750 OFF
Complete
Bathroom Remodel

RE-BATH SERVICES

- Shower Replacements
- Walk-in Showers & Tubs
- Bathtub Replacements
- Wall Surrounds
- Bathroom Vanities & Fixtures
- Aging in Place
- Natural Stone
- Tub-to-Shower Conversions
- Bathroom Flooring & Tile

Financing Options Available!



Bathroom
Remodeling
Made Easy!

Visit Our Showroom or
Call Today for a
FREE In-Home Consultation!

6010 Oleander Dr.
Wilmington, NC 28403

BBB A+ rating

910-406-6605

REBATH.COM

RE·BATH

Columbia Records released *King of the Delta Blues Singers* in 1961. In the early '60s, Steve LaVere, a researcher and promoter of blues artists, began to focus on the Johnson legend, making himself wealthy in the process. Anderson sums up seemingly endless controversy in one paragraph: "People say Steve LaVere made Robert Johnson a legend. No. Steve LaVere didn't tell Eric Clapton about Robert Johnson. He didn't tell Led Zeppelin or the Rolling Stones. Musicians already knew Brother Robert's work before LeVere got into the picture. That's the whole reason LeVere got involved. Those big artists had covered Brother Robert's songs that nobody had copyrighted. Brother Robert was already a goldmine fifteen years before he won a Grammy. Steve LaVere caught on before anyone else, and we never caught up to him."

As for the oft-repeated myth that Johnson sold his soul to the devil and the melodramatic stories surrounding his death by poisoning or from the ravages of congenital syphilis, Anderson dismisses it all, noting that people will say "anything for a dollar."

Despite endless legal wrangling, Anderson and her half-sister Carrie Spencer never profited from Johnson's belated success, and a sense of bitterness shades her memoir. In addition to setting the record straight, money is surely one of the motivations behind *Brother Robert*. Claud Johnson, who was ruled by the Mississippi Supreme Court to be Robert Johnson's son, received over a million dollars in royalties in 1998. "My family lost all we worked for during the past twenty-five years," Anderson writes. "You know, I was born at night, but not last night."

Anderson supplies blues enthusiasts with a few mundane but revealing recollections that help flesh out the character of Robert Johnson, but we still lack a fully dimensional portrait. The man remains a mystery, a mostly fictive figure whose 29 recordings have had a profound influence on an essential American art form.

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry and four North Carolina Press awards.

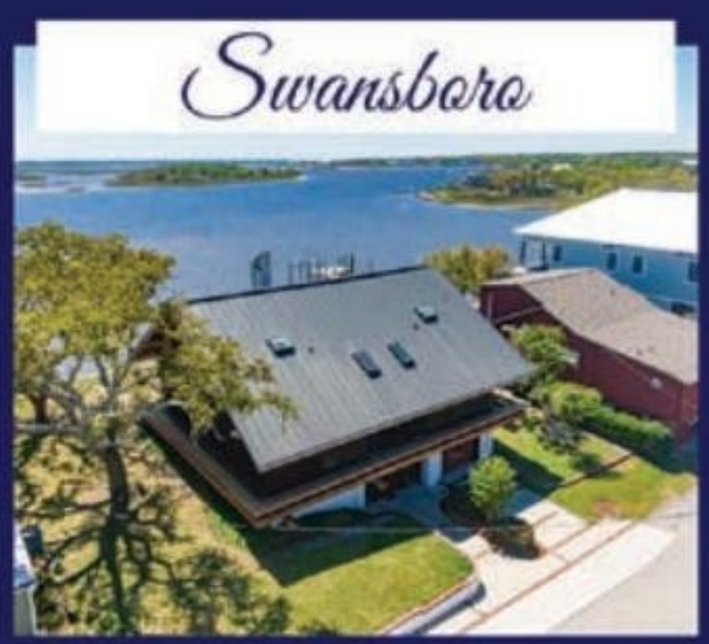
Mitchell
PRIME PROPERTIES
The Art of Selling Well®

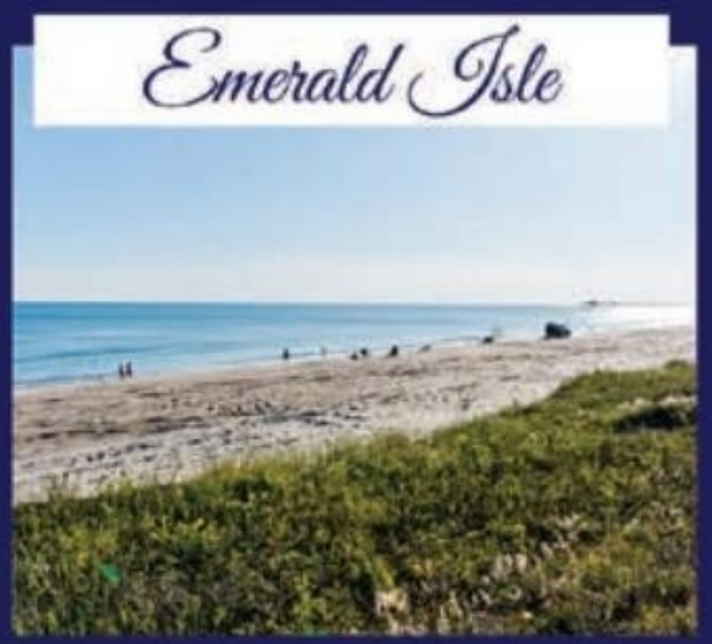
Emerald Isle

5210 Emerald Drive
Ocean & Sound Views | $570,000

Pine Knoll Shores

137 Dogwood Circle
Oceanfront | $1,250,000

Swansboro

417 S. Elm Street
Intracoastal & Canal Front | $1,500,000

Emerald Isle

7505 Ocean Drive
Oceanfront | $1,175,000

Ryan Ayre
Cell: 252.241.4922
Office: 336.722.9911
Ryan@GoMitch.com
www.GoMitch.com
LUXURY REAL ESTATE
Winston-Salem | Charlotte | Raleigh | Lake Norman | Emerald Isle | Blowing Rock | Wilmington | Crystal Coast

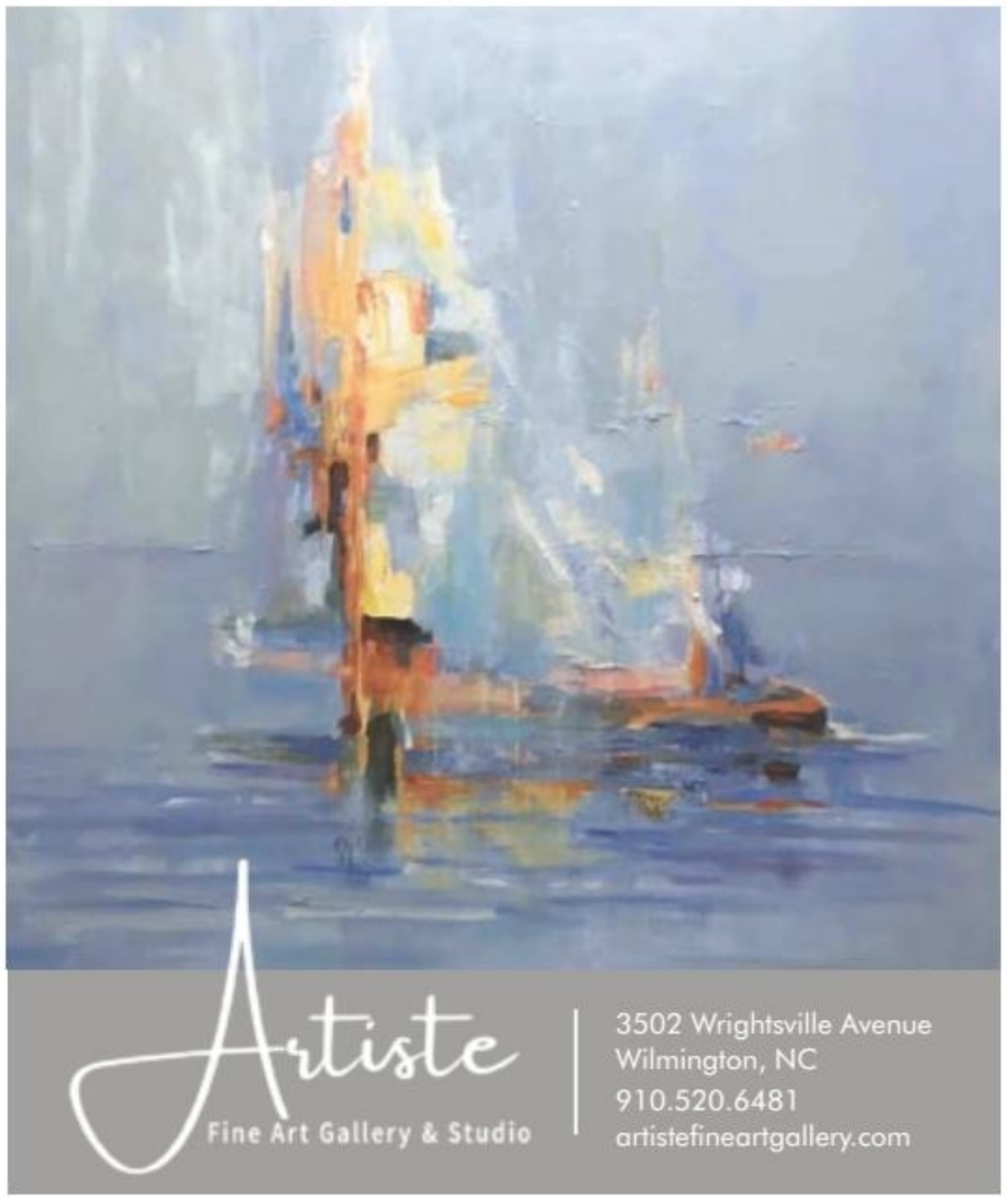
Pine Valley
ANIMAL HOSPITAL

Kenneth E. Layton, DVM
Welcome Jessica Tarter, DVM

Proud to be the Veterinarian team for Paws4people Foundation

Family Owned and Operated

106 Longstreet Drive | Wilmington, NC 28412 | 910.799.4500
www.PineValleyAnimalHospital.com
Hours: Mon-Fri 8am-6pm | Sat 8am-12pm



BRING IT DOWNTOWN

BRING IT DOWNTOWN

SHOP AND EXPLORE
over 150 unique shops, galleries, boutiques and salons promotinglocal and regional specialties.

DINE OR HAVE A DRINK
at over 100 restaurants and pubs, many with outdoor terraces or sidewalk café seating.

DOWNTOWN WILMINGTON
showcases the history of the town and promotes the vibrancy of the Cape Fear River.

PARK FREE FOR THE FIRST 90 MINUTES IN CITY DECKS AND CATCH A RIDE ON OUR FREE TROLLEY!

bringitdowntown.com

COASTAL CABINETS

910.792.6152 CoastalCabinets.com

Life after Shark Attack

The remarkable spirit of Paige Winter

PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB MACKOWSKI/OPEN APERTURE PHOTOGRAPHY

By Dana Sachs

Paige Winter: Survivor

On June 2 of last year, a shark attacked you when you were in the ocean near Morehead City. How do you remember that day?
When I think about it, it doesn't freak me out. It almost feels like a dream because all the blood loss and stuff made me loopy. I remember talking to my dad and my brother and the paramedics and the helicopter guys. My whole body went numb. I knew what had happened. I was like, "Wow."

You were 17 then?
I'm still 17. I turn 18 next month.

Your dad, Charlie Winter, got you away from the shark. It's lucky that he's a paramedic and firefighter.
I feel more lucky because he's a big man! He has all types of muscles, so he is really strong. He was a paramedic when he was getting me out of the water, but once he got me on the beach he was like, "OK. I'm a dad. This is my kid. I'm freaking out." He wasn't screaming or crying or anything, but he was freaking out. He looked worried.

It's interesting that you could perceive his emotions, considering what you were going through yourself.
Yeah. I was laying down, most of my blood gone, and my dad crawled out of the water and I was like, "Did it get you?" And he was like, "No!" I was worried about him.

When you were in the water, did you know immediately that it was a shark?
No. I've been to the beach a lot, and my dad and other people they'll grab my leg because they think it's funny. I started laughing. And then it started to really hurt and I got pulled under water and it stopped hurting and I just felt nothing. I thought it was a snapping turtle because I ran my hand over it and one way is smooth and the other way is rough. I thought, "This is smooth. It's a *really strong* snapping turtle." And then I was like, "No. It's not."

Both you and your dad have an ability to remain calm in an emergency. Did you always know that about yourself?
I didn't. You know that idea of "fight, flight, or freeze"? I've always had the freeze effect. I thought that if something really popped off I'd spring into action, but when this happened I mostly froze. I was scared, but I was like, "My dad's going to come get me in a second."

NEWLAND

NORTH AMERICA SEKISUI HOUSE

Newland is the largest private developer of mixed-use communities in the United States. With our partner, North America Sekisui House, LLC, we believe it is our responsibility to create enduring, healthier communities for people to live life in ways that matter most to them. newlandco.com | nashcommunities.com

©2020 Riverlights. All Rights Reserved. Riverlights is a trademark of NNP IV - Cape Fear River, LLC, and may not be copied, imitated or used, in whole or in part, without prior written permission. This is not intended to be an offer to sell nor a solicitation of offers to buy real estate in Riverlights to residents of Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, and Oregon, or in any other jurisdiction where prohibited by law. No guarantee can be made that development of the Riverlights Community ("Community") will proceed as described. Some properties being developed in the Community may only be in the formative stages and are not currently constructed, but are envisioned for the future. Any information on such properties is presented to set forth certain prospective developments for general informational purposes only. NNP IV - Cape Fear River, LLC ('Fee Owner') is the creator and Fee Owner of the Riverlights Community ('Community'). Certain homebuilders unaffiliated with the Fee Owner or its related entities (collectively 'Riverlights') are building homes in the Community ('Builder(s)'). Fee Owner has retained Newland solely as the property manager for the Community. North America Sekisui House has an interest in the member entity in the Fee Owner. Newland and North America Sekisui House (i) are not co-developing, co-building or otherwise responsible for any of the obligations or representations of any of the Builders, and (ii) shall have no obligations whatsoever to any buyer regarding a home purchase from a Builder. Buyers of homes from any of the Builders waive to the fullest extent permitted by law any and all claims against Newland Communities and/or North America Sekisui House arising out of their purchase transaction with a Builder. Prices, specifications, details, and availability of a Builder's new homes are subject to change without notice. EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Ultimately, you lost your left leg and your pinkie and ring fingers of your left hand. You've had four surgeries and spent a month in the hospital. What did you have to learn in order to take care of yourself?
I quickly adapted. My hands were all casted up to my elbow except for one thumb that wasn't affected. Within a week, I learned how to text with that thumb. My situation was always changing. I went from that big, bulky cast to more narrow splints to just wearing splints in the daytime and then to no splints at all except on my left hand at night.

You had nerve damage in your left hand?
It's all types of damage because I tried to get the shark off of me by putting my hands in its mouth — which, by the way, doesn't work. Please don't try it.

OK! Were you left-handed or right-handed?
I was right-handed. So, yay!

You're working to help your left hand become more functional?
I don't think I'll ever have full function. It'll be more like for gripping stuff, which is fine. I didn't really use it for much anyway.

And how about your prosthetic leg?
I like it a lot. I can't really run with it. We're working on getting me a blade prosthetic, which is engineered for athletics. I'd use that one for performances because I do theater and chorus and I have to run around a lot.

In a few months, you'll receive a service dog named Otis, who is currently being trained by the nonprofit Highland Canine Connect. Can you tell me about Otis?
Otis is a very perfect man and I love him. If I try to get up off the floor, Otis will be the thing to help me push up. And if I drop something, he'll pick it up and bring it to me. And turn on light switches. Open doors. He is a goldendoodle. He's very calm. He's black and white with curly hair, just like a cow. That's why I named him Otis, which is the name of the cow in *Barnyard*, a movie I loved when I was little.

It might surprise people to know that you're also an advocate for sharks.
Yeah. I think it was in the ambulance that I

said, "Dad! Don't be mad at the shark." It's just an animal being an animal. There's risk whenever you do anything. I didn't want anyone to hurt it because I know that shark population numbers are getting really bad.

Since your accident, you've started to have a pretty broad public profile on Instagram. How do you use it?

Yes, I'm @probably.paige. I'm mostly interested in climate change, environmental conservation, LGBTQ rights. Equal rights for everybody, more representation for people with disabilities. I have never seen a single movie with someone with a prosthetic.

You've joined the actor Robert Downey Jr. in helping protect the oceans. What's the project?

It's called the Footprint Coalition, and it's going to use new technologies to eliminate microplastics in the ocean. I'll be an ambassador, a voice for younger people because, you know Robert Downey Jr. He's great, but he's also not a teenager.

Would you like to get into theater or singing when you grow up?

Look, I love Miss Ariana Grande with all of my heart. I wanted to be just like her for so long. And I could still go with that. I still like to sing. But right now people are pushing me to do environmental work, which is great. That's fine with me.

Some people go through 10 or 20 different careers in their lives.

Right. I'm about to *just* be an adult. I can't decide everything right now.

How do you think you've changed in the past year?

I used to freak out over everything. After all that happened to me, I thought, "OK. Maybe I'm a little bit stronger than I thought I was." But I'm still a teenager. A lot of people online forget that I am 17. I still care about teenager things. When I wanted to be homecoming queen, people were like, "It's such a shame that you actually care about this stuff." And I'm like, "I'm 17."

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

PINEHURST CAPITAL

Let our team of experienced financial professionals guide you to and through a confident and secure retirement!

David Moore Photography

Wealth Management | Taxes | Estate Planning
401(k) Plans | Employee Benefits | Succession Planning
Real Estate Transactions | Business Formation
Insurance | Virtual Family Office Services

PINEHURST CAPITAL

Comprehensive Financial Planning
Here for you... here for family... here for life! ™

www.pinehurstcapital.net
910.235.4140

Pinehurst | Wilmington | Raleigh

Pinehurst Capital, Inc. is a Registered Investment Advisor in the state of North Carolina.

The Perfect Ending

One man's awakening on the water

By Nicholas A. White

During my senior year at Clemson University, I lived in student housing on the wooded shores of Lake Hartwell. It was a dream community for someone like me. Not owning a boat, I sometimes borrowed my buddy's kayak after class, and on the best evenings, caught fish with almost every cast. But I loved that time on Lake Hartwell for more than the good fishing. True contentment for me exists somewhere within the calm of open water.

After graduation, however, it only took a few months for the "real world" to chip away at my happiness. I worked as an engineer in Charlotte, surrounded by the bustle of corporate America instead of the serenity of a lake. My writing suffered. I didn't know that in a few years I would move to the coast for graduate school at UNCW, but still I stumbled from bed with a cup of coffee at 3 a.m. to squeeze in a few hours of writing before heading to work. It didn't take long for me to start waking each morning with bitterness, a vengeance to conquer the day, as if my post-graduation life were something in need of bludgeoning with a big stick. I dreamed of escaping the real world for a few hours in search of the contentment and peace I'd once known during moments in college.

Something needed to change.

I bought the same model kayak as my friend's from college, versatile and well-priced — the cheaper option of high-quality fishing kayaks. My pleasure-purchase stoked a dormant fire. With something to do other than sulk, I added accessories between weekend fishing trips, bought a safety flag for increased visibility, and mounted two adjustable rod holders. It was the best money I'd spent in years.

I continued going to work each morning at the engineering office, although by now I understood the restraints on my passion for creative writing would one day burst. But at least I had something to reach for. With a kayak in my truck bed, I had something to excite me, something to ground me in the present moment and keep me from floating away.

I lasted until 2016 in a cubicle, a whopping two years, before resigning.

After my last day, I went straight to a local lake, hoisted my kayak overhead with a grunt, and walked to a nearby floating dock. It was more important than just a fishing trip. It was a turning point between old and new: a major milestone in my life.

I paddled toward the main cove of the lake, hoping for a perfect ending to a perfect day. I knew even then I might someday return to engineering, especially if the time came to start a family, but for now, I intended to enjoy the next era of my life, the present moment, like I had on Lake Hartwell during college.

Before long, a peaceful sunset hovered above the trees, and I stopped fishing to admire the different shades of orange on the horizon. Even as I passed one of the best fishing spots in the lake, I paused to enjoy the sunset, absorbed by a feeling of peace and contentment that I wouldn't have traded for anything.

I found my perfect ending.

Heading home in my truck, I rolled down the windows and glanced in the rearview. The things I loved that evening: my kayak, my truck, my life, the radio's music, the sweat on my skin, the wind, the road, the freedom — I had them all. My heart was full, not from the future or the past but from the present, from the miracle of what happens between sunrise and sunset each day, while the world's alive with light, ready for us to explore.

Almost four years later, here I am, living in Wilmington. I'm about to graduate with my MFA in creative writing at UNCW. I

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NICHOLAS A. WHITE

work part-time at an engineering firm in town, and I'm also a teaching assistant for a couple of engineering courses. Perhaps the biggest surprise has been finding enjoyment by splitting equal time between engineering and creative writing, both sides of my brain able to work. All I needed, apparently, was a little balance.

My truck has a new owner, as does my kayak, after I sold them both for financial reasons. Following a passion comes with a price. But the water still calls to me. I find myself writing short stories about the tidal creeks here. I find myself, even without a truck or kayak, still aware that true contentment exists somewhere within the calm of open water. So I use the cheaper option for now: a twenty-dollar inner tube, an exercise weight, and a rope. With warmer weather, you can find me floating in the Intracoastal at sunset, barely anchored to shore.

Nicholas A. White is a writer and engineer with degrees from Clemson and UNCW. He lives in Wilmington, where he's at work on a novel.

Welcome home ... to your bed

1929
MATOUK

Wilmington's exclusive Matouk partner

protocol
ELEMENTS FOR GOOD LIVING

3502 WRIGHTSVILLE AVE
WILMINGTON, NC 28403
910.796.9595
WWW.ELEMENTSFORGOODLIVING.COM

LUXE
HOME INTERIORS

We not only have a beautifully decorated home by working with Luxe, we have long lasting friends.
-Luxe Home Interiors Client

www.luxewaterford.com 910-371-0464 Next to Harris Teeter in Leland

Strawberry Fields Forever

Classic shortcake is nice. But it's hard to beat this spirited twist on summer's most luscious berry

By Jane Lear

Although it may sound strange, soaking, or macerating, strawberries in a mix of sugar, orange juice, and Madeira or sherry is far from a new idea. Macerated fresh fruit was a Victorian fad borrowed from the French, and in *Miss Leslie's New Cookery Book* of 1857, by the popular American cookbook author Eliza Leslie, you will find "Strawberries in Wine." There's no citrus, but Miss Leslie does specify Madeira or sherry. The berries are "served at parties in small glass saucers," she noted, "heaped on the top with whipped cream, or with white ice cream."

My grandmother used glass saucers for serving as well — they hold the winey juices nicely — but her rationale behind macerated strawberries wasn't a special occasion but a too-hot-to-bake day. By June, her house would be dim and shadowy, the tall windows shuttered to keep out the heat and bright shafts of sunlight.

Preparations for the evening meal — a pot of snap beans set to simmer, for instance — usually began in the cool of the morning, after the breakfast things were cleared away. A "strawberry bowl," however, was left until the drowsy afternoon. I'd be pulled away from Nancy Drew to help wash a colander full of the ripe fruit ("always leave the caps on, dear, so they don't get waterlogged") and pat them dry with well-worn tea towels reserved for just that purpose. Trying to copy my grandmother's neat flick of the wrist made quick work (or so I thought) of hulling.

You may wonder if a fortified wine such as Madeira or sherry — or port, if that's your preference — will overpower strawberries, one of the softest, most perishable fruits, but I'm reminded of the "Nobody puts Baby in a corner" line from the movie *Dirty Dancing*. Although each wine adds its singular, supple balance of sweetness and acidity to the berries, the fruit not only holds its own but gains extra resonance. (The same is true of strawberries with balsamic vinegar, traditional in

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES STEFIUK

Modena, Italy, the home of *aceto balsamico.* For this, you need the best, oldest balsamic vinegar you can find; the kind that's been reduced over time to a syrupy liquid.)

Strawberries need warm sunny days and cooler nights for peak flavor and fragrance. When shopping, look for even coloring (those with white shoulders haven't had enough time to fully ripen) and a captivating aroma. Those that travel the least generally taste the best, so seek out local growers such as Lewis Nursery and Farms, a third-generation family operation that includes a U-pick (6517 Gordon Road and Highway 117 in the Wrightsboro-Castle Hayne community).

Whipped cream or vanilla ice cream à la Miss Leslie are perfectly fine accompaniments to macerated strawberries, but my grandmother's favorite embellishment was actually an exercise in household economy: leftover (i.e., slightly stale) sponge cake or pound cake, cut into fingers or cubes and toasted. The end result was modest and restrained, yet completely refreshing, and afterward, everyone at the table stood up, ready for a game of cards or Parcheesi.

What I realize I'm ready for, though, is a set of Victorian cut-glass saucers. And maybe some Nancy Drew.

Strawberries with Madeira and Orange

1 quart ripe strawberries

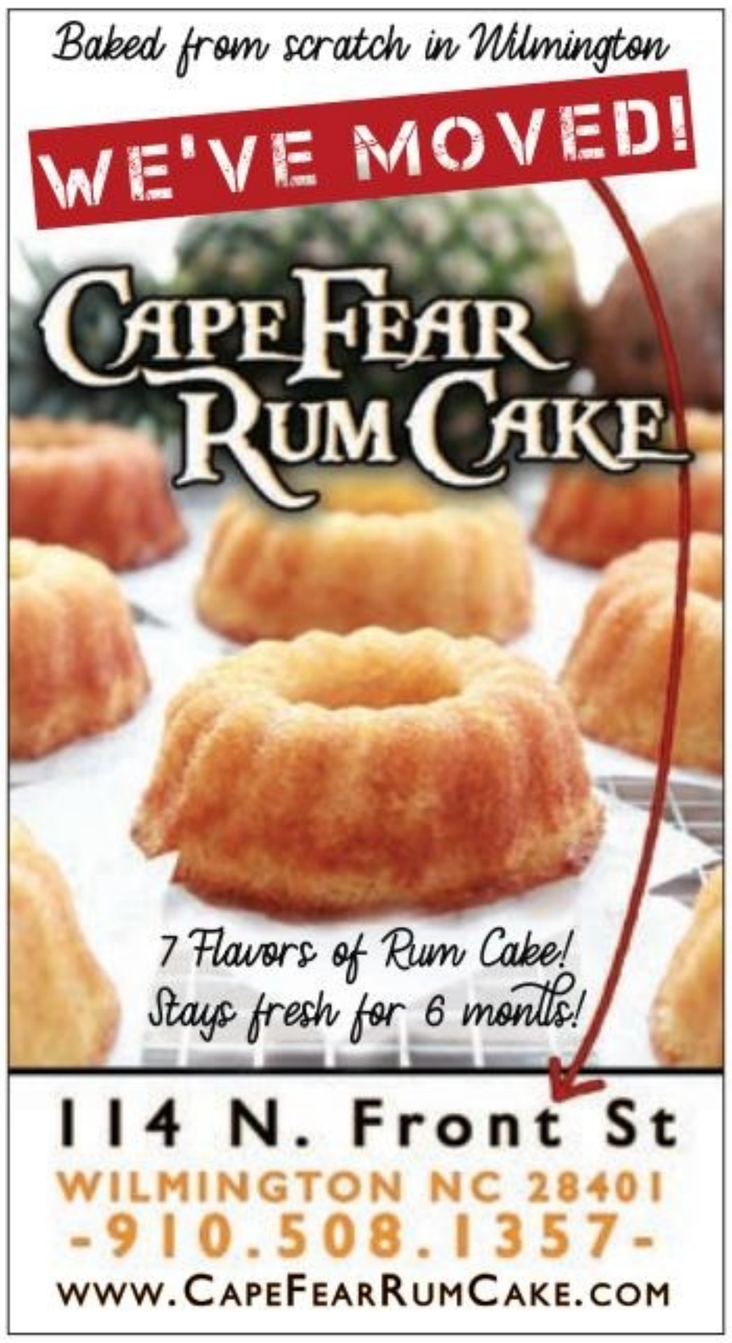
Sugar to taste

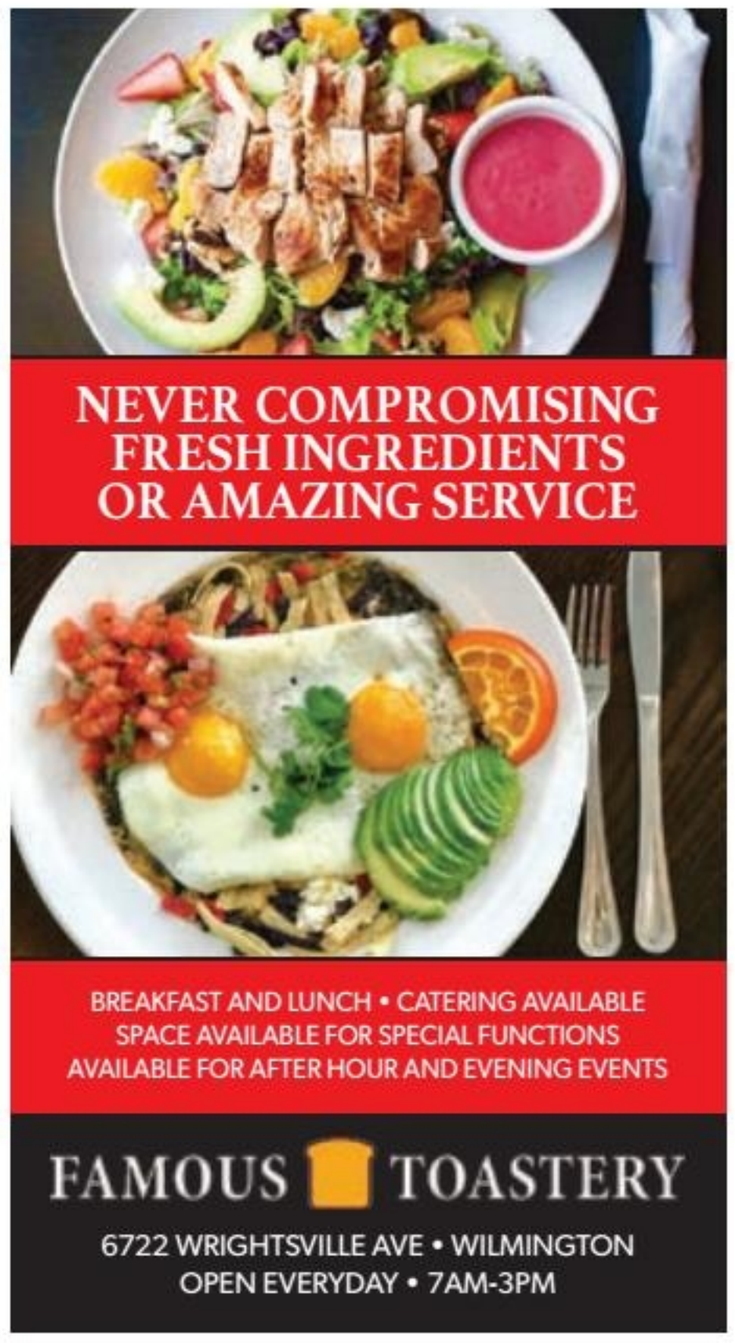
About 1/4 cup freshly squeezed orange juice

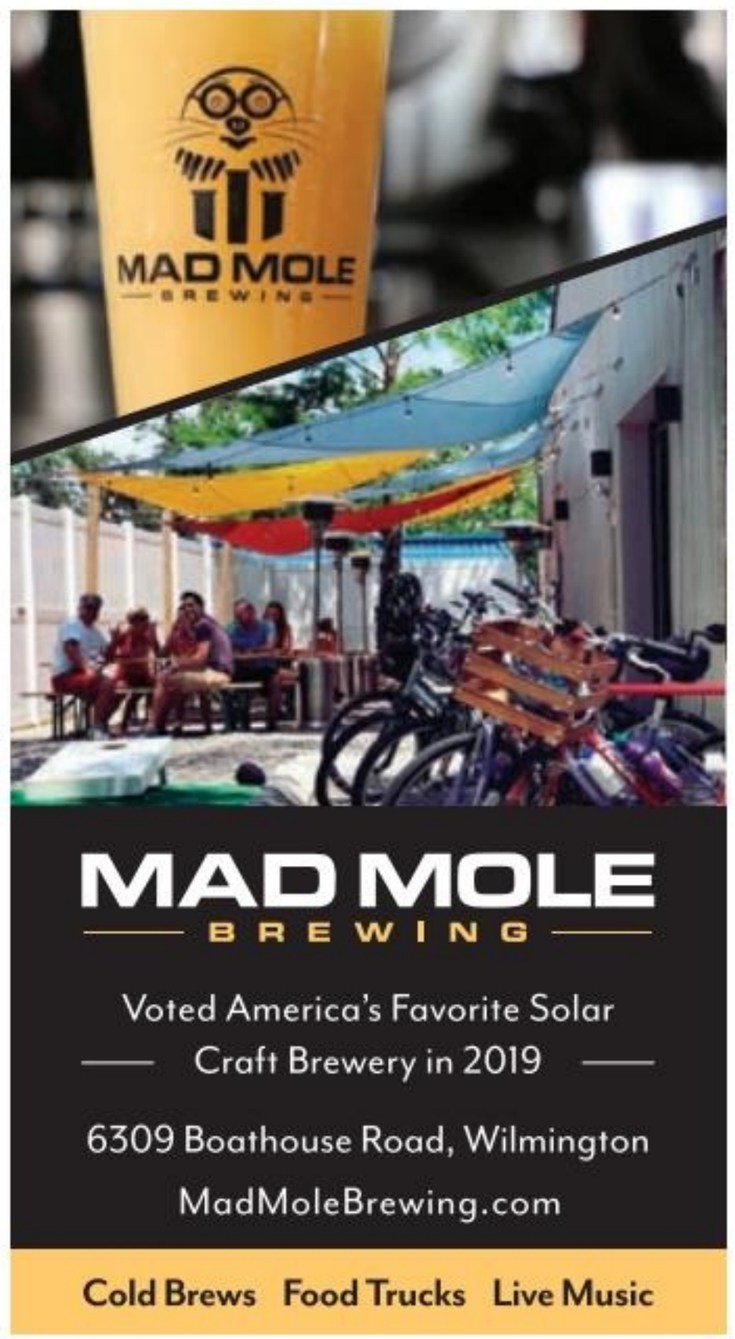
About 1/4 cup medium-dry Madeira or sherry

1. Quickly rinse the strawberries and pat them dry. Hull them with a paring knife and put the whole berries (halve them if large) in a serving bowl.
2. Generously sprinkle them with the sugar and gently stir in the orange juice and Madeira. Refrigerate, covered, until the berries release their juices and the flavors have a chance to play well together, about 2 hours.

Jane Lear, formerly of Gourmet *magazine and* Martha Stewart Living, *is the editor of* Feed Me, *a quarterly magazine for Long Island food lovers.*




NEVER COMPROMISING
FRESH INGREDIENTS
OR AMAZING SERVICE
BREAKFAST AND LUNCH • CATERING AVAILABLE
SPACE AVAILABLE FOR SPECIAL FUNCTIONS
AVAILABLE FOR AFTER HOUR AND EVENING EVENTS
FAMOUS TOASTERY
6722 WRIGHTSVILLE AVE • WILMINGTON
OPEN EVERYDAY • 7AM-3PM



CERTIFIED
ARTS FRIENDLY

Second Annual
theArtWorks™
Village Artists Exhibition and Sale

Hours
Sunday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Wednesday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Thursday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Friday 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Saturday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Opening Reception
As Soon as Possible

Closing Reception
To be Announced

Gallery Verrazzano
Painting • Mixed Media • Photography • Pottery • Sculpture
Fabric Art • Glass Art • Jewlery Art • Literary Art • Media

200 Willard Street, Wilmington N.C. 28401

leisure world
casual furniture

offering the finest selection of quality
outdoor living furniture & accessories

6629 market st. | www.leisureworldcasual.com | 910.392.7748

THE BUTCHER'S BUNDLE
4 (5 oz.) Butcher's Cut Filet Mignons
4 (4 oz.) Boneless Pork Chops
4 (4 oz.) Omaha Steaks Burgers
4 (3 oz.) Gourmet Jumbo Franks
4 (2.8 oz.) Potatoes au Gratin
4 (4 oz.) Caramel Apple Tartlets
Omaha Steaks Seasoning Packet

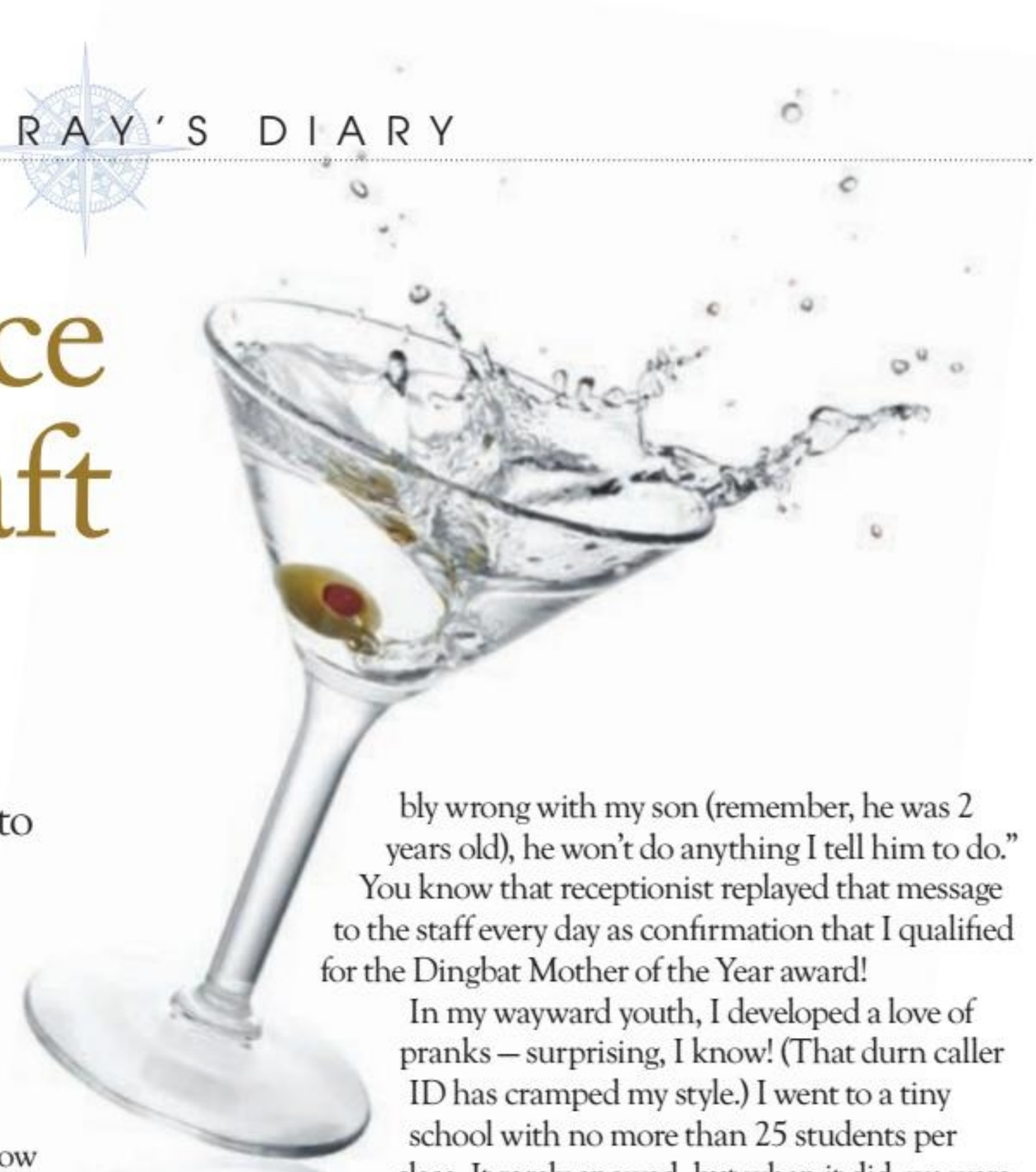
~~$238.91~~* separately
COMBO PRICE $69.99

*Savings shown over aggregated single item base price. Limit 2 pkgs. Free gifts must ship with #61086 Standard S&H will be added. Expires 5/31/20. ©2020 Omaha Steaks, Inc.

ORDER NOW! 1.855.647.7316 ask for **61086SVD**
www.OmahaSteaks.com/dinner615

Remembrance of Things Daft

And a half-full martini glass



By Annie Gray Sprunt

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, Buddha and Mister Rogers that I do not have school-aged children home who I am responsible for educating . . . it would not have been pretty.

During this coronavirus pandemic, I am desperately trying to embrace my inner introvert, but it's not going well. Gwyneth Paltrow renamed her divorce "conscious uncoupling." Well, that's what I need to do with the news and the refrigerator. I watch my hair color becoming more "distinguished" and listen as my faux eyelashes hit the floor, one by one, like the needles on a Christmas tree. I have arranged the canned goods alphabetically, but I might go back and rearrange them by color. I have cleaned every nook of my house, including the cleaning supplies. I've ironed everything except the pets. I have read so many books, it feels like the last week of summer, when I used to binge-read my summer reading list.

During this unprecedented time of uncertainty, I could sit around, sans proper foundation garments, wringing my hands, feet and earlobes, or I could turn to what helps me cope (other than sauvignon blanc and Jamoca Almond Fudge ice cream): humor. As my gift of distraction to you, please turn off the news, sit back and enjoy some random nuggets of ridiculousness.

Growing up in the Episcopal Church, a young person couldn't receive Communion until they completed confirmation class. Preconfirmed children would remain in the pew while their parents went up to the altar to receive Communion. Years before I understood what Communion meant — the minister offers a wafer symbolizing the body of the Lord and wine symbolizing the blood of the Lord — I (loudly) whispered to my friend in the neighboring pew, "It's not blood, it's only *ketchup*!"

In the third grade I wanted to have a birthday party, and I insisted on writing my own invitations. On the invitation, I wrote, "Please bring your sleeping bag and a present." Luckily, my mother intercepted and deleted my audacious present request.

Twenty-four years ago, when my son was about 2 years old, I actually called my pediatrician, Dr. Charles Brett, on the after-hours office emergency line. I left a message: "Dr. Brett, I think something is terribly wrong with my son (remember, he was 2 years old), he won't do anything I tell him to do." You know that receptionist replayed that message to the staff every day as confirmation that I qualified for the Dingbat Mother of the Year award!

In my wayward youth, I developed a love of pranks — surprising, I know! (That durn caller ID has cramped my style.) I went to a tiny school with no more than 25 students per class. It rarely snowed, but when it did, we were all thrilled because school would be canceled. The local television weatherman suggested that perhaps there might be an itty-bitty hint of a possibility for snow. So what did I do? I called the local television station and identified myself as Margaret Higgins from the school and canceled school. And they did.

And guess what? It did not snow, but we had a free snow day! (Since then, there is a security code word to ward off bored middle-school pranksters.)

And for those of you who could not get enough of my Boston adventures in last month's issue, here are a few more grisly details. During my investment boutique interview, I was offered the job, and my boss-to-be explained the particulars. Then he said a phrase that was unfamiliar to me. He said, "After a year, you can have a week off." Clearly, he had not seen my calendar for the upcoming year and didn't understand. I told him that I had to go home for at least a week for Thanksgiving and at least a week for Christmas, and that my uncle always had a Fourth of July party that I just couldn't miss. And I also told him that I was scheduled to be a bridesmaid in 12 upcoming weddings and I would probably have to take off Wednesday afternoons before each wedding weekend so I wouldn't miss any of the festivities.

Dear Reader, I got that job because he thought that if he didn't hire me, he had no faith that anyone else would. I was a charity hire. He didn't understand that I wasn't working because I wanted to be an award-winning secretary, I was working to have something to do between weddings.

Helpful hint for these trying times: Think of your martini glass as half-full!

Annie Gray Sprunt is a lifelong Wilmingtonian, award-winning mother, and self-deprecating bon vivant.

Never Cut Your Nails on Sunday

And other peculiar remedies from our quaint American past

By Nan Graham

We are doing all we can to ward off our modern pandemic monster: COVID-19. Masks, social distancing, Purell, even our homemade version with alcohol and aloe vera are standard in homes worldwide. This isn't new. Epics of plague and pestilence begin with recorded history . . . a fascinating mélange of myth and medicine.

We speak of disaster of Biblical proportion recorded in Exodus. Egypt was beset by the 10 plagues of frogs, locusts, lice, and ultimately death to the firstborn. Bizarre cures for victims of smallpox epidemics, as well as the disease itself in times of the last emperors, contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire. The Black Death in the Middle Ages wiped out one-third of Europe's population. Possibly 200 million souls.

Early legend has it that upon stepping out of the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve's hasty exit, Satan inadvertently created garlic and onion. From the left footprint sprang garlic and from the right . . . onions. Both eventually came to be common cures for stricken plague victims. The fatal flaw in this story: If Satan in Eden presented as a serpent . . . how could he leave a footprint? Just sayin'.

Nevertheless, garlic and onion combined with honey have both been touted as medicinal miracles in times of epidemics. During the Bubonic plague, these remedies with other ointments and syrups added mystical elements to the mixtures: spells, incantations, most were rhymes. Think "Ring around the rosie, pocket full of posies" — an ineffective strategy, since this baleful ditty ends with "Ashes, ashes, we all fall down."

Some of the sick souls endured the holistic treatment of putting a living frog in the patient's mouth to inhale the disease. Happily, for the patient and frog, both were released when the patient's mouth finally opened and the unhappy amphibian escaped to his lily pad, hoping to turn into Prince Charming one day.

Such panaceas, especially those rhyming ones, may have eased the patient's mental suffering, despite having zero organic effect on the actual disease. Contrary to modern science, sneezes were considered lucky for the sneezer. Not so much for the sneezee. The claim was that an *achoo* blew off plague, evil and pestilence.

There was even an ancient prophecy to sort out what to expect of a sneeze by each day of the week:

Sneeze on Monday . . . get a letter; Sneeze on Tuesday . . . something better; Sneeze on Wednesday . . . sneeze for danger (poor Wednesday: "full of woe" day to be born and for sneezing"); on a Thursday . . . meet a stranger; sneeze on Friday . . . for some sorrow; on a Saturday . . . see friend tomorrow. Note: Apparently, no sneezing permitted on Sunday. The day doesn't even make an appearance in the rhyme.

Superstitions from those days are endless. Never cut your nails on a Sunday, the saying goes, or you will be in danger of ill health all week. To help a patient sleep, roll cobwebs into a pill-size ball and encourage to swallow. Actually, cobwebs have long been used to stop minor bleeding from small cuts. Garlands of the plant Rue were worn around the neck to protect the wearer from the Black Death. A wild pansy boutonniere is an old charm for "gladdening the heart," something we could all use these days. The problem is, where do we find a wild pansy confined in our own home practicing "shelter in place"?

Sadly, plagues are not new to Wilmington or North Carolina. The yellow fever epidemic here during the worst of Civil War days in 1862 caused nearly 700 deaths. In the tiny graveyard behind our county's oldest surviving church structure, Lebanon Chapel in Airlie Gardens, rest victims of the yellow fever epidemic.

In more modern times, the 1918 influenza pandemic, also called the Spanish Flu or Spanish Lady, wiped out families and was particularly severe among young people. But on September 14, 1918, Wilmington, then a prospering town of 30,000 souls, thought it to be "the common cold" until patient numbers began to double every day. Fevers soared to 104 degrees. Within four days, 400 native Wilmingtonians had the "Blue Death," another grim nickname for its oxygen-deprived victims.

Even with lockdown, influenza case numbers exploded. More than half who contracted the disease died, 250 Port City residents. Suddenly, it was over.

Scarlet fever frequently raged through the population, even during my lifetime. My great uncle Johnny was stone deaf after a severe case of scarlet fever. I had it during World War II, when I was 6 years old. The family was quarantined in the house. I was stuck alone in a bedroom. An official printed sign from the Health Department was nailed to our front door:

NO ENTRY HERE! QUARANTINED!
BY ORDER OF THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT

My older sister was confined to the house and even today complains about the severity of her siege. My best friend Nita caught the fever from me and ended up losing all her hair from her high fever. Her mother made her a cunning little white muslin cap to wear until her hair grew back. I was pea green with envy. My cousin Matt came by to visit and stood outside my closed window in his Army uniform and sang to me. Even better, he was a wizard with a yo-yo . . . this handsome young man performed astounding tricks: Walking the Dog, Round the World, and my favorite — Rocking the Baby. An indelible image seared into my memory. Later we got word that he was killed in the Battle for Brest in France. He was 26 years old.

Polio was a lifestyle-changer in my childhood. No one knew what caused the crippling summertime disease. So summers meant state-wide lockdown. We were forbidden to go to the swimming pool or the movies. It was early "social distancing." With no immunization for the dreaded disease, the outcome was usually severe. I paged through photographs of patients in *Life* magazine, mostly bedridden children, some on crutches or worse still, in iron lungs. Terrifying!

Mama's mantra to us emerging from a romp under the backyard hose: "Take those wet bathing suits off right this minute. Don't forget, FDR got polio from sitting around in a wet bathing suit!" (This warning is to be filed with Mama's litany of questionable medical advice: "Don't use that new-fangled roll-on deodorant. It causes cancer of the armpit. Only use MUM!")

It amazes me when people today say no one knew FDR was crippled by polio. In first grade we bought March of Dimes stamps with our meager allowances because our dear president had contracted polio and was lame. Everyone did know, but in deference to FDR, photos were not taken. Roosevelt wanted to maintain the image of strength as the leader of our country in World War II and so soldiered on despite his infirmity. It was a lesson to us all.

So, we are in for the test. When this is over, let's grade our reaction to our own 21st-century pandemic. "Social distancing," instead of garlands of Rue; sheltering at home, instead of frogs in the mouth; and gratitude to our courageous first responders instead of continuous whining, is our goal. Together, now, let's earn an A plus. We've got this.

Nan Graham gives special thanks to the long-suffering Molly Graham Allred for her extraordinary transcription skills.

OYSTER NO. 4

PART OF A SERIES OF PRINTS
BY JOHN W. GOLDEN

AVAILABLE AT
The Golden Gallery
910.762.4651
311 North Front St.
www.thegoldengallery.com

CRAIGE & FOX PLLC
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS AT LAW

P: 910.815.0085 F: 910.815.1095

JENNIFER M. RODEN
ATTORNEY AT LAW

North Carolina State Bar Board
Certified Specialist in Elder Law

Certified Elder Law Attorney
by the National Elder Law Foundation

LAWRENCE S. CRAIGE
ATTORNEY AT LAW

North Carolina State Bar Board Certified
Specialist in Elder Law

• WILLS • SPECIAL NEEDS TRUSTS • GUARDIANSHIPS • ESTATE ADMINISTRATION

701 MARKET STREET | WILMINGTON, NC 28401 | WWW.CRAIGEANDFOX.COM

YOUR DREAM
AWAITS

Have a vision for a home remodel
or restoration job that you
need a local professional?

- Home remodel/reconstruction
- Rental readiness
- Custom kitchens/bathrooms
- Carpentry

Restoration & Remodeling

CM BUILDS NC LLC

(910) 319-1753
cmbuildsnc@gmail.com
www.cmbuildsnc.com

Changing Lives Daily

Comprehensive Care • Veneers • Implants
Teeth Whitening • Snoring Appliance
TMJ treatment Orthodontic
Treatment/Invisalign • and more

Wilmington Smile
Design Center
Michele Simpson DDS

Looking to change your smile?
Check our our website to get your
free Smile Virtual consult.

3317 Masonboro Loop Road, Suite 140
Wilmington, NC 28409
910.791.7911
www.wilmingtonsmiledesign.com

Black Skimmer

Elegant summer feeders

By Susan Campbell

Without a doubt, the black skimmer has the most unique foraging style of all the birds you will see along our coast. Although it feeds on fish, like its relatives the gulls and terns, it is a very different animal. Black skimmers, as their name implies, feed by flying low over the water and skimming the surface. Their success is based on the fact that their lower mandible is longer and extremely sensitive to touch. When they encounter a fish, the top part of the bill reflexively snaps shut, ensuring the prey is caught. As soon as the fish is swallowed, they once again assume their unique posture and prepare to catch the next one.

The black skimmer is found along the East Coast in the summer. In North Carolina, the species will breed and loaf on sandy beaches only if undisturbed. In coastal communities where people and ground predators are numerous, skimmers are more likely to be found on small islands, particularly ones that have originated from dredge spoil and are adjacent to inlets. It is a food-rich environment and safe from nest robbers such as raccoons, opossums, foxes and the like. Such island habitat has, not surprisingly, become critical for nesting waterbirds in general. And given the fact that so many species, including black skimmers, are communal nesters, established breeding sites tend to be busy, noisy places.

In addition to their unusual orange and black bills, skimmers can be recognized by their black upper parts, white under parts and bright orange legs. With relatively long, pointed wings and a stout, forked tail, they are very maneuverable in flight: an invaluable quality for a bird that pursues small, fast-moving prey. Even if they are not foraging, skimmers can be recognized by their flight posture since the head is always carried lower than the tail. When the birds are not feeding, their long bill becomes something of a liability. Individuals are frequently seen with their heads down and necks outstretched on the sand. This resting posture, too, is unique to the black skimmer.

The nest of a skimmer is a mere scrape in the sand. The eggs are generally sand-colored with flecks of brown or black, which creates excellent camouflage against a background that includes pieces of gravel, shell fragments and other debris. The two or three downy young are, like the eggs, mottled and well-hidden against the sand, given their coloration. They are also known to scratch into a hollow and kick sand over themselves in order to remain hidden in the absence of their parents. Also, due to the shape of their bills, the adults must regurgitate onto the sand, not directly into the mouths of the very young nestlings.

As is the case with so many bird species, black skimmers form large flocks outside of the nesting season. They can be seen skimming synchronously in lines or rows over schools of herring, mullet or other small fish. Given that they find their prey by feel and not by sight, they are frequently seen feeding at dawn and dusk as well as at night. This likely reduces competition with gulls and terns, which require bright light for successful fishing.

So keep an eye out the next time you are on the water. You just may encounter one of these amazing, low-flying birds.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted at susan@ncaves.com.

WILMINGTON
Blind & Shutter Closet
COMPANY

Blinds | Shutters | Custom Closets | Murphy Beds

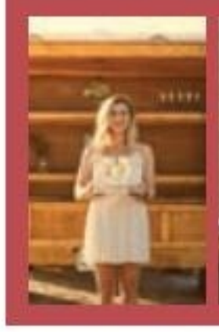
Your guests deserve the best

Visit our Hunter Douglas Gallery and
Murphy Bed Showroom Today!

moreSPACEplace

6617 Market Street
wilmingtonblinds.com
910.799.8101

PRIVATE PARTIES | SPECIAL EVENTS
WEDDINGS | SMALL GATHERINGS



The Bar Car
Mobile Mixology
910-431-0277
thebarcarmobilemixology.com

Maid In Brazil
"Cleaning the world one house at a time"

910-660-2272
Bonded and Insured
Commercial and Construction
Cleaning
FREE ESTIMATES

Nineteen Fourty Four
[dancing the foxtrot]

Memories surfaced, I saw my parents
young and full of themselves.
He an Army Air Force pilot.
She a hostess at the USO.

The sudden rushing realization
of youth, impetuousness, and intention
to make a difference
in a world at war.

Feeling grateful for this . . .
this source of influence is deep in my bones.

Dictates of the time
flying into the future, together,
flying in formation
towards a life together

Moving on as seeing them anew
no longer as old: young, with all that vigor.

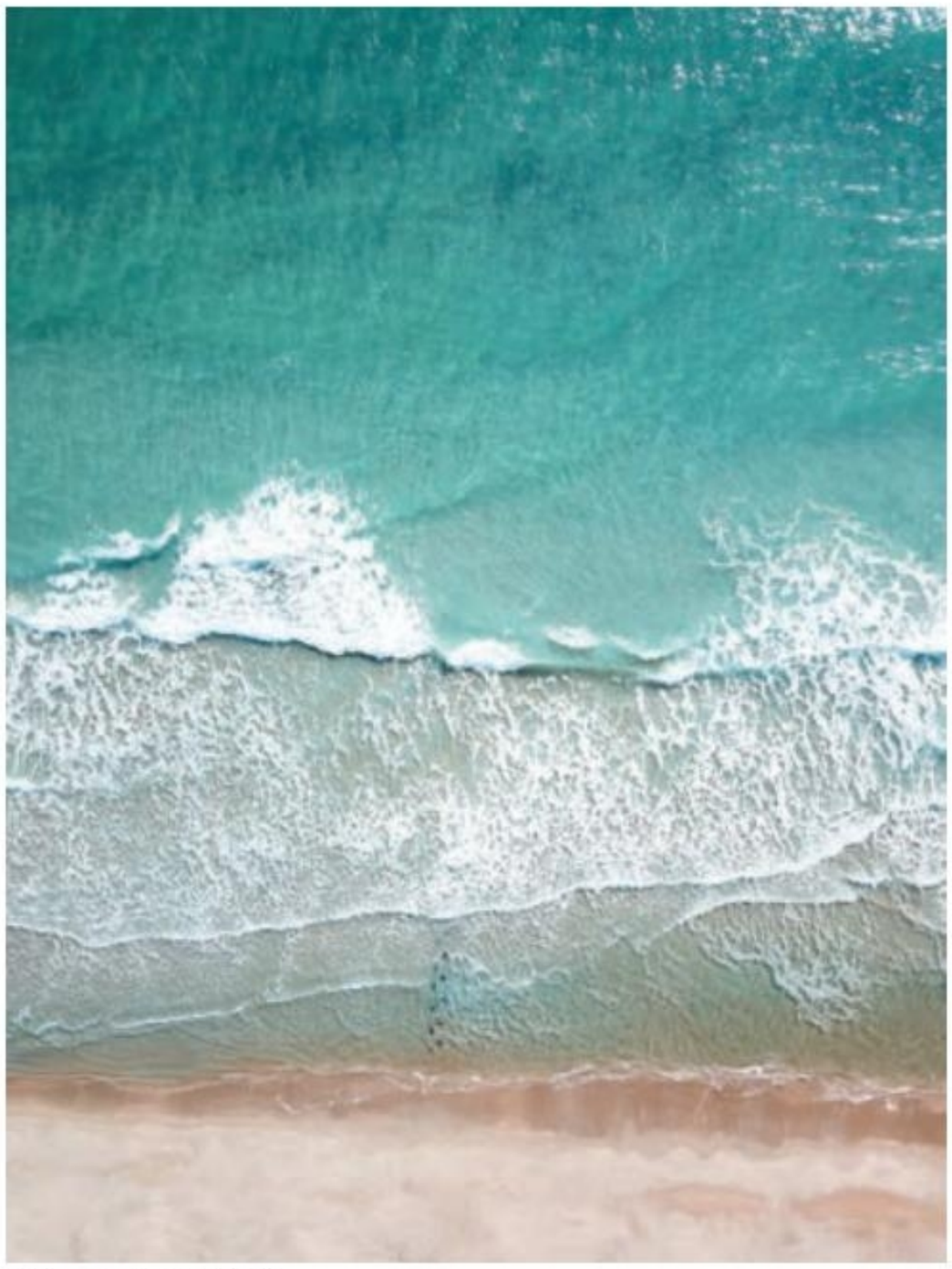
No dementia any more, gone now
they are dancing the foxtrot together to Benny Goodman.

– *Raymond Whitaker*

Hank Carter

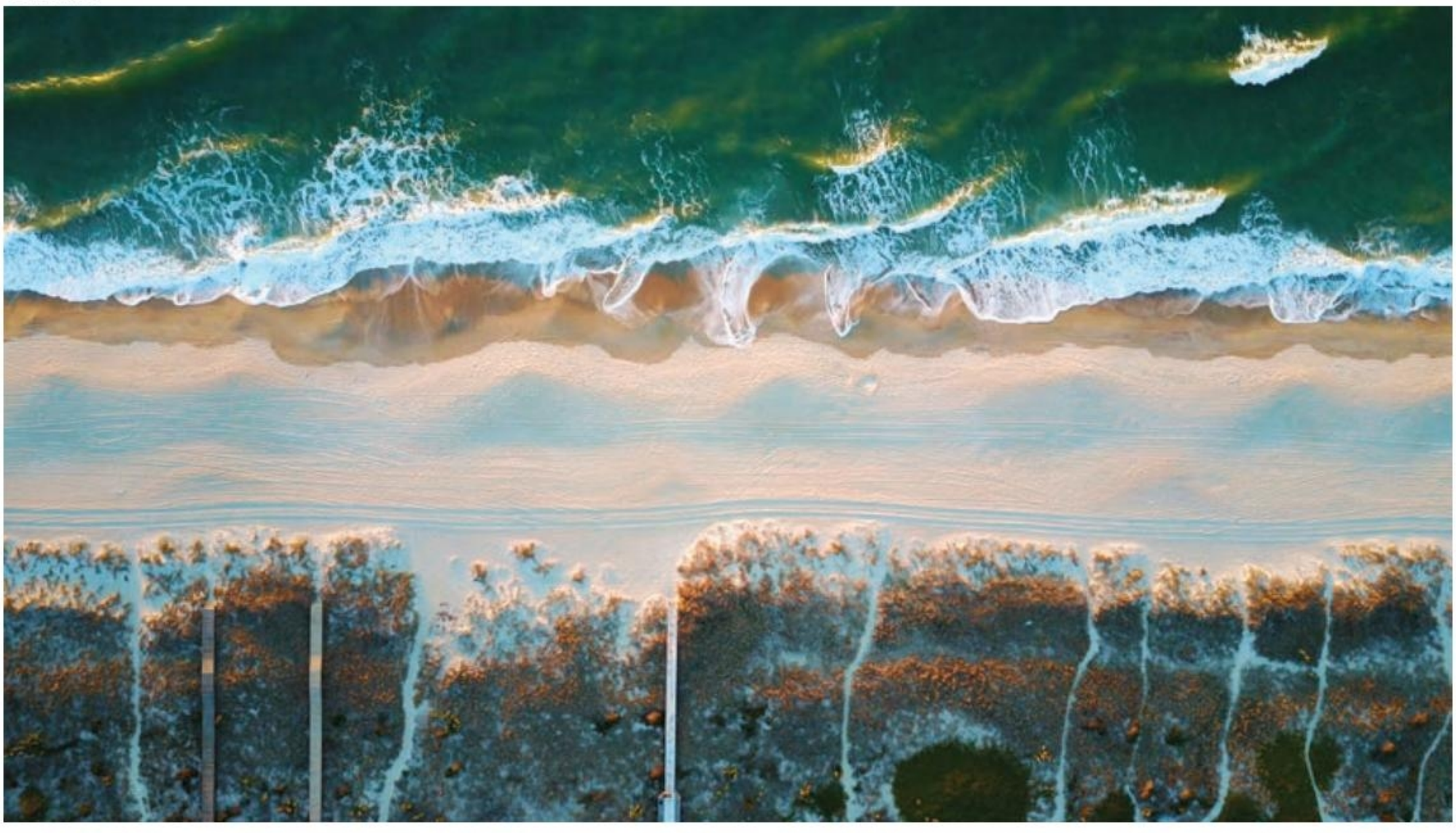
Hank Carter became interested in photography from a very early age, when his mother, an artist, encouraged him and his sister in their creative pursuits. "And I was lucky enough to grow up on Harbor Island, so I spent my days fishing, surfing and exploring the area," he says. In 2015 he purchased a drone to take out fishing, and soon it took him in a direction he never expected: "I did not know anyone around who had one, and drone photography had just started showing up on social media. I had to teach myself how to fly and how to take pictures. It has been a great experience."

After graduating from UNCW, Carter went to work on the water. He is now a chief mate on an ATB (articulated tug and barge) on the West Coast, and has an alternating three-week schedule so is able to come home often to see his wife, Britt, and their 2-year-old son, Hank, who share his love for the water. And his drone goes wherever he does: "I carry it with me anytime I travel, fish, or just sitting on the beach. It's a great way to share the place I love from a new perspective."



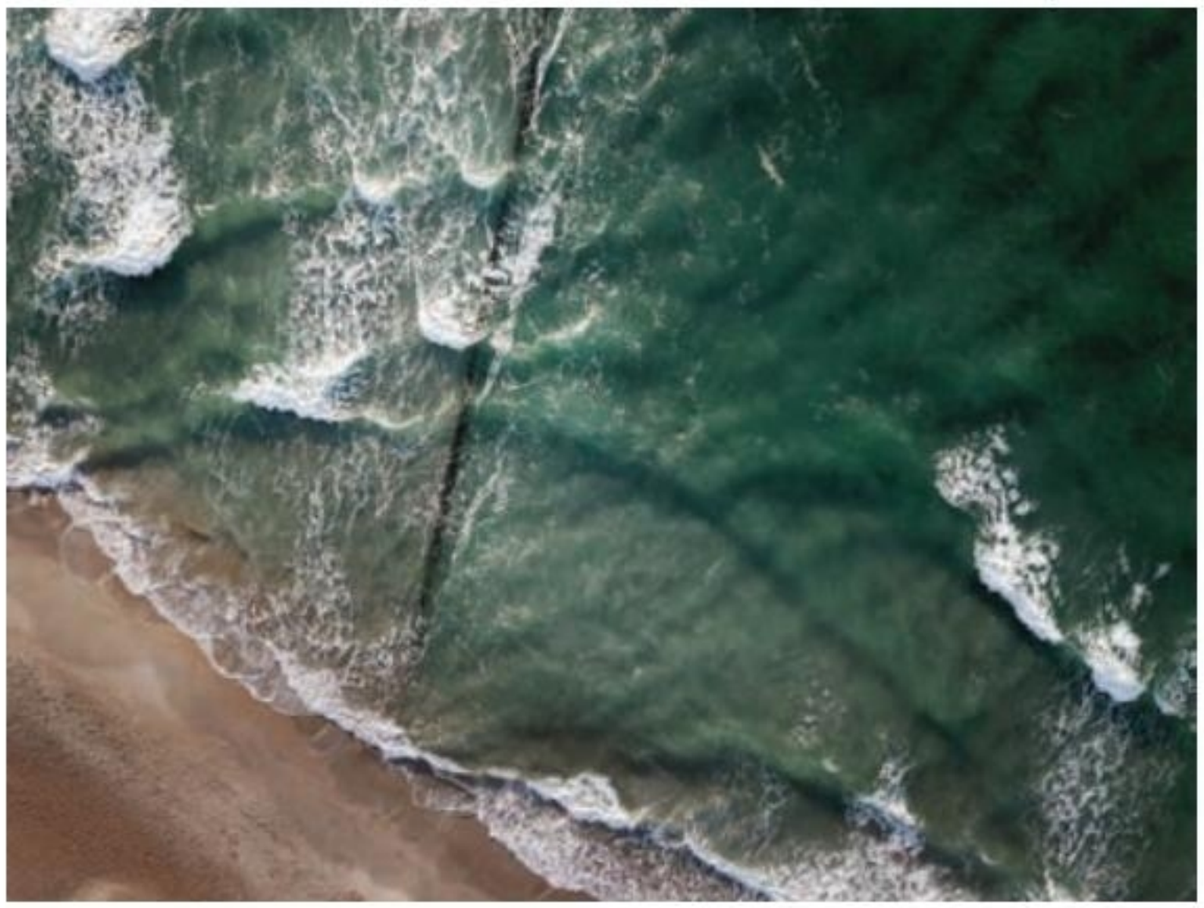
"Tourquoise Water"

"All Roads"

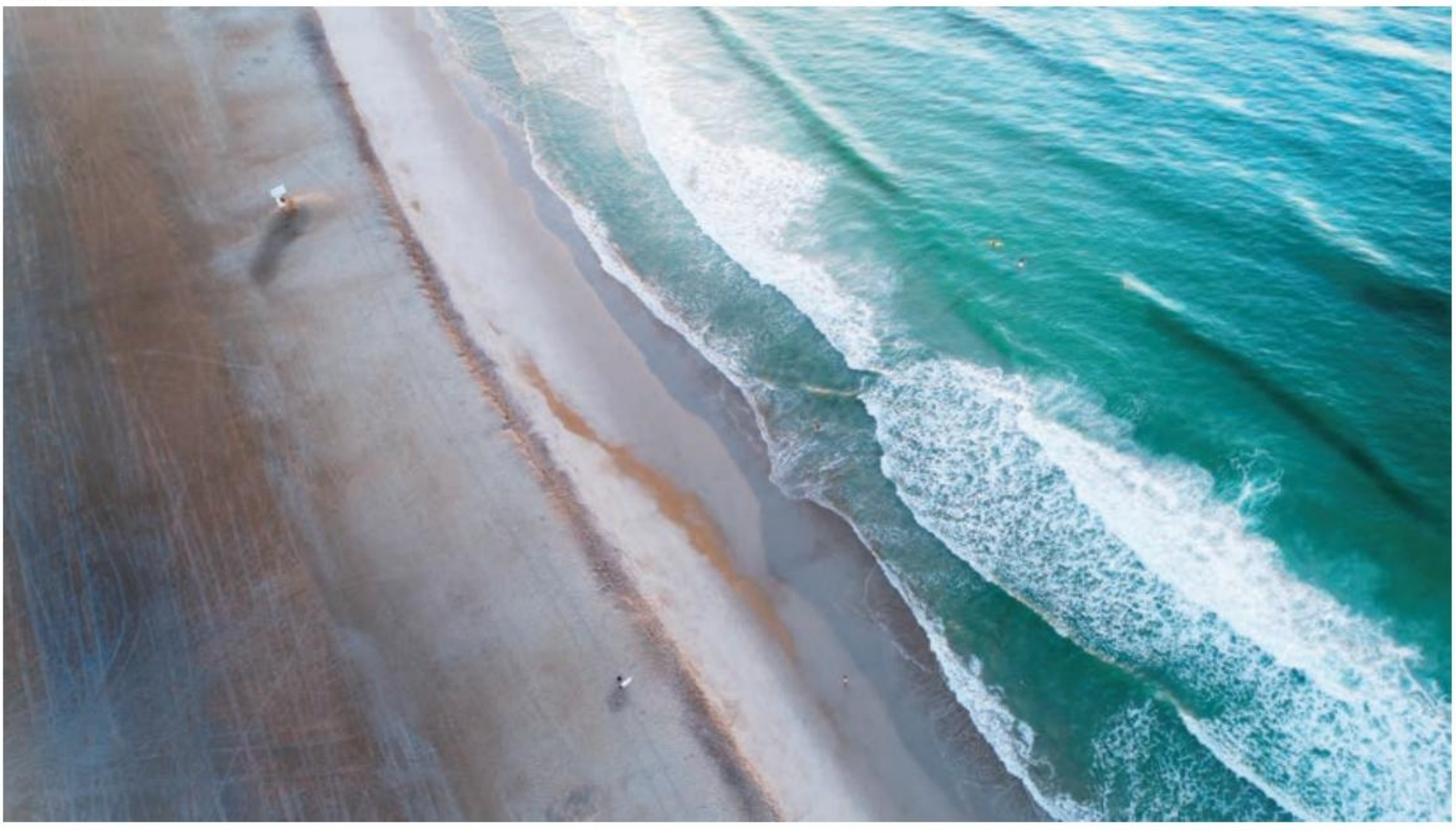


"White Water"

"Jetty Texture"



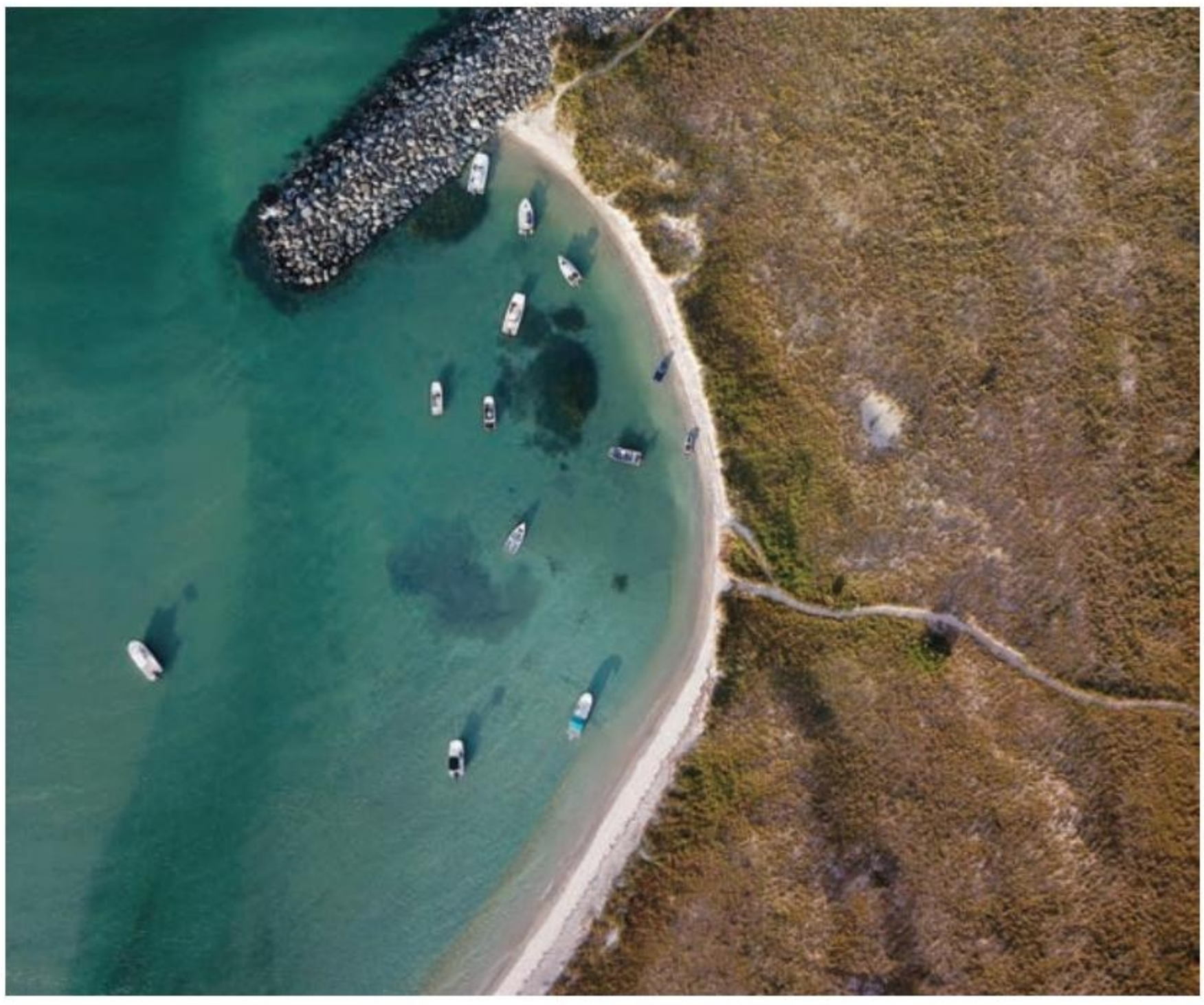
"Sunrise Shadows"



"Banks Cruise"

"Banks Sunset"

"Inlet Fall"

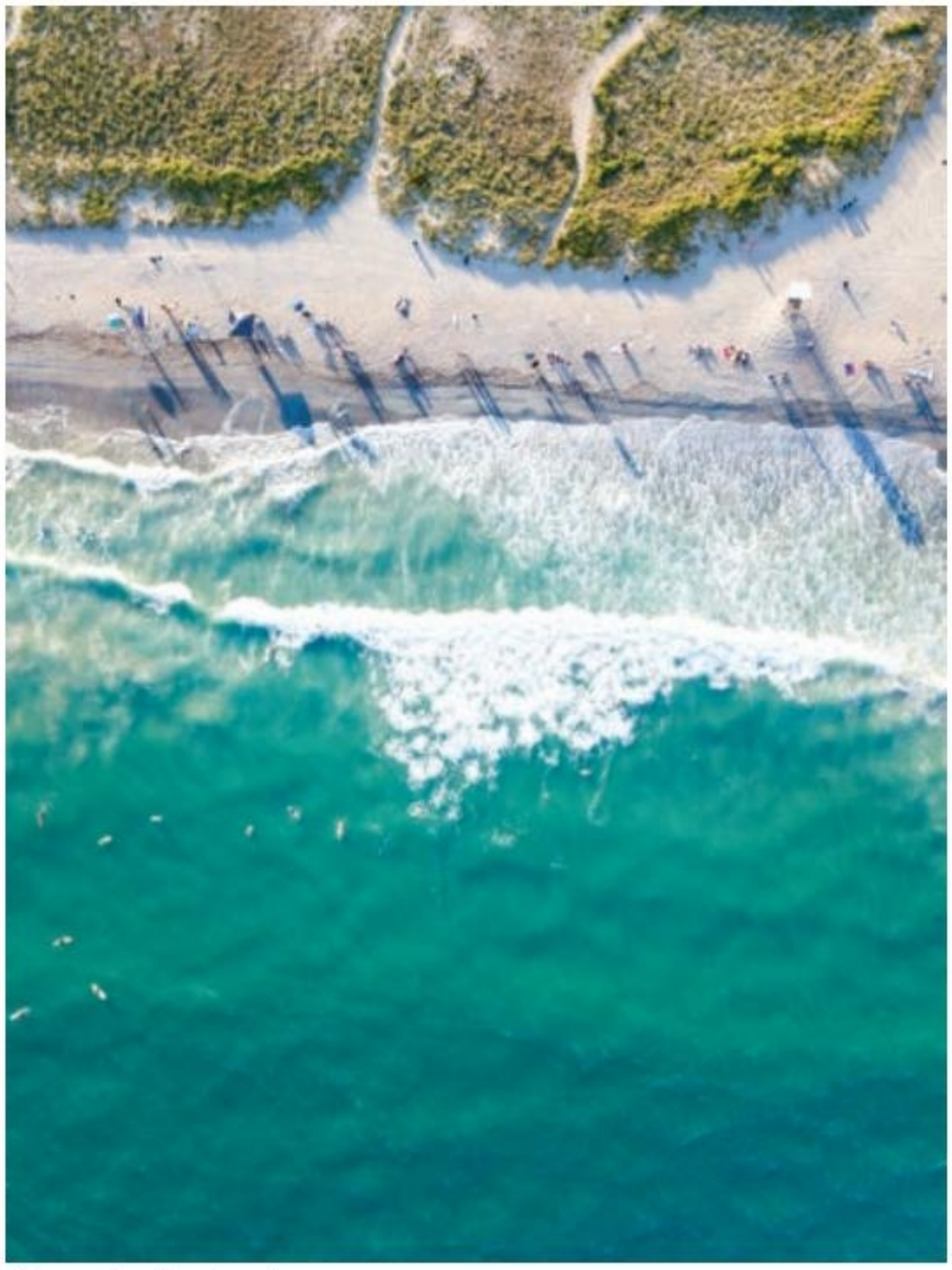


"Parking Lot"

"Dolphin Daycare"

"Spinnakers Out!"

"Rip"



"September Shadows"

"Umbrella July"

A Tender Trap

A tight-knit group of Venus flytrap poachers find easy targets in local game lands, gardens and nurseries

By Kevin Maurer

North Carolina Wildlife Officer T.C. Stacy flipped on his police lights when he spotted the muddy car exiting the Pinch Gut game lands between U.S. 17 and N.C. 211 in Brunswick County. It was a Saturday, and he'd been teaching a hunting safety class in Harnett County with Master Officer J.D. White when they got a picture of a poacher making his way across the game land from one of their motion-activated game cameras. The camera was part of a monthlong investigation last year into flytrap poaching from Pinch Gut.

Stacy and White pulled up behind the car with their lights flashing. The driver pulled over to the side of the road. When Stacy got to the driver's side window, he found Archie Lee Williams Jr., 41, of Bolivia. Williams' clothes were covered in dirt. His hands were filthy. Stacy noticed thick grime under his fingernails.

"Were you hunting?" Stacy said, peering into the car.

"No," Williams said.

"You out drinking beer or running dogs?"

Williams wasn't doing either. "You know what I was doing," he said.

Stacy did. Williams was a flytrap poacher, one of many who live and work near the game land in Brunswick County. It's a crime that you can only find within 75 miles of Wilmington, where flytraps are indigenous. Poachers traffic in thousands of flytrap plants yanked illegally from public game lands, as well as from gardens and stolen from nurseries.

"Do you mind if I look in the vehicle?" Stacy asked.

Williams told him he could. In the back seat, Stacy found a book bag filled with flytraps: 216 plants in all. A pair of scissors and a digging tool were also shoved into the bag.

"Do you mind showing me where you got them?" Stacy said.

Williams took Stacy and White back into the Pinch Gut game lands and showed the wildlife officers where he had dug out the plants. Stacy took photos of the site and then arrested Williams, who faced 73 felony counts of taking a Venus flytrap. He was booked in jail under a $750,000 bond.

Later, when they questioned him, Williams admitted to poaching the Venus flytraps once a week, rotating between various game lands across the county. He sells them to a guy — Williams only told the officers the first name — who pays $25 for 100 plants. During the questioning, Williams also told Stacy he was going to eat the plants. "Yeah," Stacy said. "How do you cook them?"

Williams just rolled his eyes.

In August, Williams pleaded guilty to nine counts of felony for the taking of a Venus flytrap and was sentenced to 60 days in custody, a threshold he met while awaiting trial. His plea agreement was the result of his cooperation with law enforcement, evaluation of having a diminished mental capacity, and his efforts to mitigate wildlife loss caused by his actions by replanting the stolen plants.

Williams' case was one of the first few to be charged under the new law, which changed poaching from a misdemeanor to the same felony classification as possessing and distributing heroin. "Mr. Williams could have easily gone to prison for 700 months. I don't think that is what the legislature intended," Brunswick County Assistant District Attorney Chris Thomas says. "But there needs to be a civic consequence. This is an irreplaceable resource. Once it's gone, it's gone."

Williams did not respond to requests for an interview. His lawyer, Ryan Smithwick, says his client had limited mental ability after suffering from a traumatic brain injury. He was out of work and had no means. "He just picked up a whole bunch of plants," Ryan Smithwick says. "He didn't hurt anyone."

Crime Ring

Flytraps use nectar to lure insects — not flies per se, but the ones that crawl into its jawlike leaves. The insect brushes up against the trigger hairs that look like eyelashes around the border of the leaf and trigger the trap. The leaves close, and enzymes dissolve the insect. The insects are a supplement in the nutrient-starved soil.

The plant's scientific name, *Dionaea muscipula*, is derived from words meaning "the goddess of love" and "mousetrap." With its bright red center and spiky edges, the plant has long captured not only its prey, but the human imagination. In 1760, North Carolina Colonial Gov. Arthur Dobbs said of the the flytrap: "The greatest wonder of the vegetable kingdom is a very curious unknown species." Charles Darwin described it as "one of the most wonderful plants in the world."

Stephanie Wert Borrett, director of donor relations for the Coastal Land Trust, grew up in Texas and remembers flytraps being in her science books. The Land Trust maintains the Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden off Canterbury Road in Wilmington. "Flytraps blew Charles Darwin away," she says. "They don't grow in the wild anywhere, and they are all genetically traced back to here." The Venus flytrap was declared the state's official carnivorous plant in 2005. The Nature Conservancy estimates that 35,000 of them remain.

Jessica Roach, a graduate student at UNCW who studied flytraps and worked to conserve them in Carolina Beach, thinks the attraction

to the plant comes from how easy they are to personify. They consume bugs or "eat" like humans, she says.

So why are poachers stealing the plant?

The actual reason remains a mystery. Some believe the flytraps are being poached for supplements that promise to increase libido or help the body heal.

"It may be like a rhino horn," says John Taggart, an associate professor emeritus in UNCW's Department of Environmental Studies. A supplement company called Carnivora sells liquid drops and capsules of flytrap extract. The company's website says its products promote antioxidants and support "resistance to harmful invaders."

The demand for flytraps — either to make supplements or for house plants — has led to what the true crime podcast "Criminal" has called "a Venus flytrap crime ring."

"We don't know where they are going," Roach says. "It's really a closed ring and really tight-knit. It's very secretive."

Poaching spikes from late May to mid-June. Wildlife officers estimate about 200 flytraps are poached from game lands every week. Thomas, the district attorney who prosecuted the Williams case, wasn't sure where the poached plants ended up. He says most of the plants online were not indigenous, but clones. China and Amsterdam have large flytrap-cloning operations.

Most of the poachers are poor, rural African-Americans, according to Taggart and law enforcement officials. Thomas says several families were suspected of being in the poaching business. "They need the money," Taggart says. "They take them and sell them on the black market."

Stacy says it will be quiet for months and then one day he'll get several reports at once. "It's organized," he says.

Smithwick, Williams' lawyer, refused to provide details about the fly-poaching ring or name Williams' contact, only saying his client was two or three links between getting the plant and its end use. "Archie has been doing it since he was a kid," Smithwick said. "Local folks have done it forever. Mr. Williams can't hold down a job. He is terribly disabled. A lot of memory loss. It was a way for him to make some money." Williams has been in the justice system since 1993 and charged with myriad misdemeanors and felonies, ranging from drug possession to assault and shoplifting.

But flytrap poachers do not only hit the game lands. Fly-Trap Farm, near Supply, N.C., about 25 miles southwest of Wilmington, was burglarized in September 2013. The thieves took more than 18,000 flytraps, estimated to be worth $65,000, according to local media reports. Flytraps grow in clusters, so a poacher can get anywhere from 50 to 100 plants at a time and sell them at flea markets or to nurseries. It's free money and for a long time was just a misdemeanor.

That all changed in 2014 when North Carolina — spearheaded by New Hanover County Rep. Ted Davis — changed the poaching of flytraps from a misdemeanor and a maximum fine of $50 to a felony. Poachers now face 29 months in prison for stealing each plant.

The first felony arrests occurred in 2015, when four men were caught with 970 Venus flytraps. Williams is the third felony case since the law changed. "They come in on game land and try and make a quick buck and bounce out of there," Stacy says. "They risk a felony for $20. It's hot. Spiders. Snakes. You're in the middle of nowhere. It's hard work. You've got to know what you're looking for."

The State Trooper of the Woods

It's a Saturday in October and Officer Stacy is on patrol. We meet at a McDonald's in Brunswick County and immediately head to Holden Beach, where he has to deal with cars blocking a public boat launch. Threatening to tow NC Festival by the Sea attendees' cars is not why Stacy gave up a good-paying job in the nuclear industry to become a wildlife officer.

Stacy wanted to be a game warden from the first time he spotted one stepping out of his patrol car when he was 9 years old. Stacy was with his father hunting, and the game warden stopped to check his father's hunting license. The man's uniform was pressed and sharp, his green pants with a black line down the leg impeccable. When the game warden left, young Stacy looked up at his father and asked who that was.

"That's the state trooper of the woods," his father said.

Stacy wanted to be that. After high school, he got a job working at the Brunswick Nuclear Power Station as a mechanic. The job paid well, but his wife had to physically eject him from bed to go to work. While he turned wrenches at the plant, he applied for a spot in the Wildlife Commission. With only 220 officers statewide, the spot is competitive. It took a couple of rounds; each time he failed to get a slot, he bird-dogged the state website waiting for the next job announcement, and each time he was the first applicant. When he finally got the job, he attacked it. After a year of training in the law enforcement academy and in the field, Stacy got posted in Columbus County.

After clearing out the launch, Stacy drives back up U.S. 17 to patrol the Green Swamp Preserve. He speaks with a rural North Carolina accent. He has a slight build and short cropped brown hair. As he talks about his job and the Williams case, the passion can't be contained in the cab of his truck. This isn't a job to Stacy. This is his life. He is on patrol 24/7, even when he is home.

Wildlife officers work from home and set their own hours. As he drives to the game land, he talks about past cases. During one case, he couldn't find a hide for some duck hunters who were taking more than their daily limit. Then one night, he woke up and asked his wife to hand him his phone. He'd been driving in the area that day looking for any path to the site when it struck him. He got on Google maps and finally found the dirt road leading to the hunters.

He issued the citations soon after.

Stacy gets off the paved road and follows a dirt track into the pine forest and tangled brush. He spends the next couple of hours checking hunting licenses and making sure the deer are properly tagged. Stacy is by the book. Fair to everyone. No rules are bent. He has even issued citations to friends of the family and in-laws in the past.

"I don't like killing anything," Stacy tells some hunters after checking their deer license. "If you can make it quick and painless, be respectful of the game and other hunters." When a hunter agrees to take a dead deer from the game land, Stacy makes a point to tell the man that "went a long way with him" as he hands him a ticket for not registering a separate kill.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ORTON PLANTATION

Wildlife officer Brandon Dean with the poached plants

After checking the hunters, he heads over to an area where flytraps are prevalent. The area is deep in the game land, isolated from the main road. As he drives slowly down the dirt track, he spots a half-empty Gatorade bottle sitting on a berm. A marker or litter?

"That raises the hairs," Stacy says, stopping nearby.

Putting on an orange baseball hat because its hunting season, he trudges through the brush following a path near the Gatorade bottle. "Maybe this is just a deer path," he says. "Or maybe not." Finding the plants is difficult. Digging them up isn't easy. This isn't a crime committed by amateurs. Locations and techniques are passed down, Stacy says. Some poachers have special diggers made out of swing set pipes crushed flat into a shovel so they can slide the flat spade into the dirt and pop the plants up.

About 20 yards from the dirt track, Stacy stops and starts poking in the underbrush. It's thick and twisted. Gullies run through the sandy soil on the pine forest's floor. The search is slow and meticulous. Each step measured for fear of stepping on a patch of flytraps. The plants like space, but not too much space. They like water, but not too much. Same with sunlight. They need fire to thrive — which is why controlled burns are so important.

"They are a real finicky plant," Stacy says.

After walking back about 40 yards from the road, Stacy spots a patch under some brush in a gulley. He pulls back the tangle of brown, and it's replaced by a patch of bright green. The flytrap is small with a bulbous green head and a deep red mouth. The plant's mouth is gaping open like it just witnesses something amazing. It's mouth is open so wide, you half expect to hear the plant gasp.

Once you spot one plant, you start to see them all over. There is something amazing about seeing the flytrap up close in the wild. Their beauty sticks out, but deep down it is their exotic nature.

Let's be honest. A carnivorous plant shouldn't grow in a pine forest a short drive from Wilmington. They belong in the deepest, darkest depths of the Amazon, where they grow so big they could eat people.

But no. This little wonder grows in our backyard. And it's ours to marvel at and, more importantly, protect. Walking back to the truck, Stacy makes sure he grabs the Gatorade bottle.

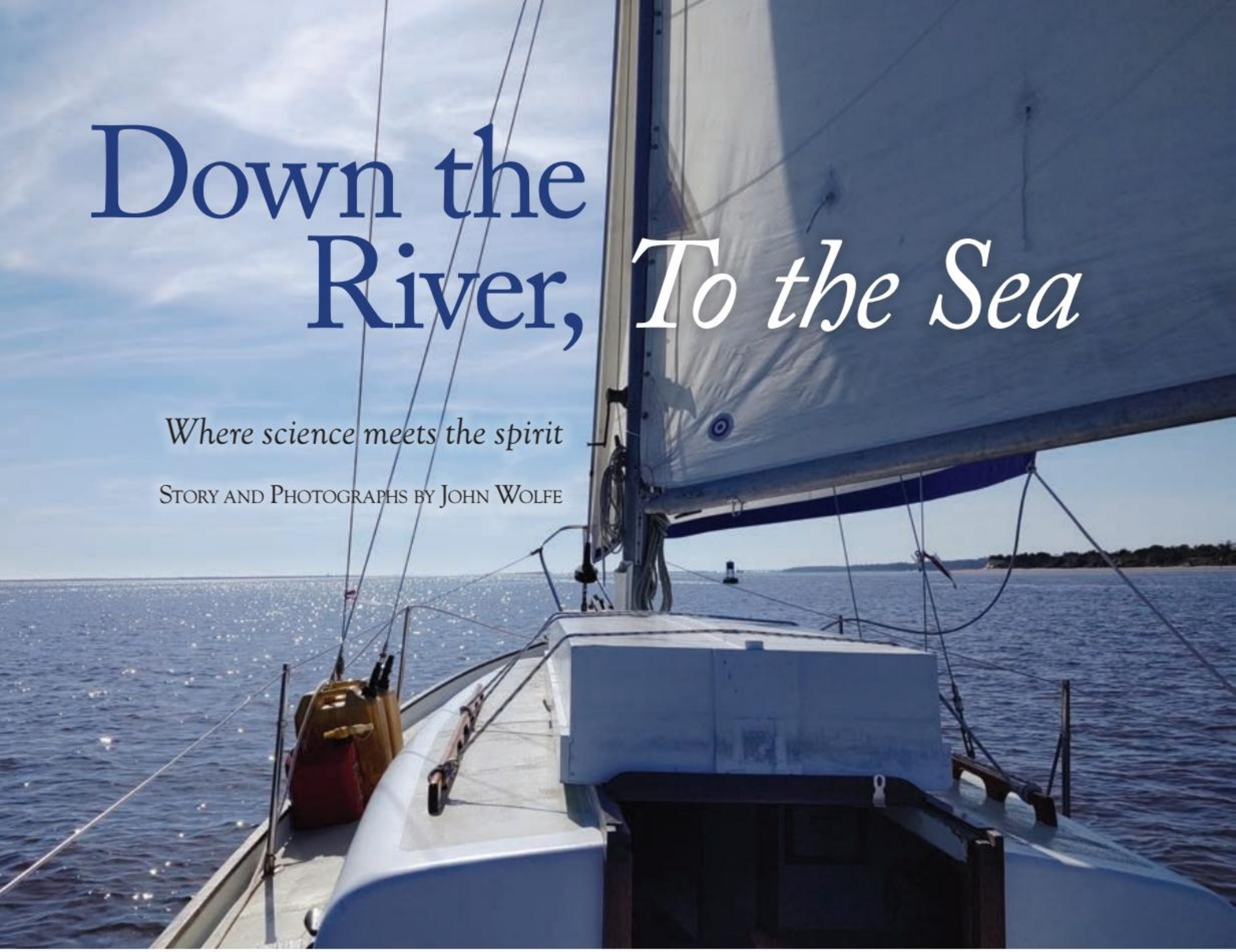
"What you think you're going to find, you're not going to find," Stacy says as he tosses the Gatorade bottle into the back of the truck. "We could spend all day looking and not find them. (Poaching) is a lot of work for not a lot of return."

Kevin Maurer is the author of nine books, including No Easy Day: The Firsthand Account of the Mission That Killed Osama Bin Laden. *He lives in Wilmington.*

Down the River, *To the Sea*

Where science meets the spirit

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN WOLFE



The unseen tug of our distant moon pulls the waters of the Cape Fear River to their highest crest, but only for a moment. Soon, the moon's synchronous dance will irresistibly bid the river to return seaward, back to the source of all water. I intend to join on this journey. There is some other force, unknowable, that pulls my spirit to wild places; it whispers to me, get out there — go beyond what you know. We all hear this call, but too often it goes unanswered. Too often we sink deeper into the stillness of calcified circumstance. Yet to be idle, as Gibran wrote, is to become a stranger to the seasons.

So onward I go, following an ancestral human urge to explore which refuses to be silenced. In the low morning sunlight of late winter, I cast off the lines of the sturdy little ketch I have christened Maia, after the brightest star in the Pleiades.

Under the roaring span of the Memorial Bridge we sail, passing patient tugboats, broad-shouldered and burgundy, waiting for their work. Along the port's bleached concrete wharves, tall blue dinosaur cranes stack boxes high on towering steel ships. Here in the harbor these giants may sleep, but I've seen them awaken on vast voyages across the deep — skyscrapers moving at school-zone speed limits. Wise sailors know to avoid them. Yet out there, even these gargantuans become tiny against the yawning void.

Past the power lines the river widens, her tea-brown waters interrupted only by low islands of tangled trees and honey-blond sand. Under Maia's white wings I spy Campbell Island, then Keg Island, the vanguard of an inshore archipelago that has been here since Capt. William Hilton sailed upriver to trade with the Cape Fear tribe in 1662. I wonder what the captain would think, were he transported aboard today. Would he recognize my modern river, with its navigational buoys and dredged-out depths, its brackish water and big ship traffic? Would the serious man crack a knowing smile at the

sun warming his arms and the river sparkling brightly below, as we catch the east wind to carry us on our course? Some things, after all, never change.

But some do. Capt. Hilton never saw Snow's Cut, whose line of red channel markers I leave to port. Neither did Gen. Braxton Bragg, whose troops camped here as Fort Fisher fell, long before the Army Corps blasted an Intracoastal Waterway through rock and sand in the 1930s. Beyond the cut, beneath the Carolina Beach Bridge, lie memories for me — long summer days of surf and sun on Masonboro Island, nights full of fire and friendship.

But today I stay in Midnight Channel, taking the path I've traveled less. I leave plenty of room between me and Sunny Point, the largest munitions depot on the East Coast, until I raise the low white pyramid of the Fort Fisher aquarium to port; beyond that, the low hills of the fort itself, mountains of history beneath its earthen embankments.

The wind and tide conspire to flush me seaward at 8 1/2 knots, whisking me by the little town of Southport. Old shrimp boats, their nets hanging like Spanish moss from their outriggers, are tied to weatherworn docks in a harbor lined with seafood bistros. Here, the waterway leaves us, heading west toward South Carolina, yet the river remains, making one final curve toward the Atlantic. Just off its final bend lies the secret entrance to my anchorage for the evening: an avenue of deep water my chart calls the Thoroughfare, arcing through the sandbar-strewn marshes north of Bald Head Island.

To reach it, I must leave the safe channel behind and blindly nose along, following my depth sounder and my gut to get over the shallow bar at the creek's mouth. The ebbing flux is all the same shade of blue-green, betraying no secrets. A brief bump — a burst of reverse — and again I am winding in deeper and deeper, following crab pots laid along the edge of a scruffy islet. I breathe a sigh of relief when my sounder again shows double digits below my keel. With a clattering rumble of chain I let go my anchor. I have arrived.

What a place. Alone in an estuary, with only whispering cordgrass and diving black cormorants for company. Alone, but not lonely. Thoreau, who knew something of solitude, never found a companion so companionable as that; he was no more lonely than the loon in the pond who laughs so loud, or than Walden Pond itself. After all, he wrote, no exertion of the legs — or setting of sails — can bring two minds much nearer to one another.

Even out here I still am surrounded, distantly, by society. The low mansions of Bald Head and the winking eye of the Oak Island lighthouse remind me of nearby neighbors as they bookend the inlet to the sea that I love — that place of mystery and magic, where science meets the spirit. Seven years back I first saw this inlet from the other side, looking back at land with leagues of blue water before me, nervous and excited, aiming for islands to the south. Out there was isolation — hundreds of miles from anyone besides the crew you sailed with. But we made it through, and after our bout with the elements, after 10 days of soaking spray and towering waves, what true delight it was to return again to the embrace of land and the wonders that it holds. The smell of the earth, fresh fruit, elbow to elbow with humanity again, encountering new faces, stories, dreams.

The sun begins to sink; the sky subtle shades of yellow and pink. Through the inlet now sails a ship filled with fellows I may never meet, but whose craft and memories I share — wide water, struggle, a thankful return. I sit on my foredeck, drinking tea, watching them pass. Even the biggest machines of humanity retain the elegance of the people who move them.

I take bearings on the lighthouse to place myself, then head below for hot soup, music, and a Hornblower novel as a cheery fire dances in my diesel heater. My meal finished, I poke my head out of the companionway and watch the moon rise slowly from the marsh, her rays dazzling the wind-rippled surface of the creek. Slowly she traces her path along the ecliptic, pulling the tide with her. There again, ever present, that quiet call to adventure. In the evening solitude I hear it with even more distinctness. Tomorrow is another day.

Dawn breaks early with our moon in the western sky, the lighthouse a slow echo beneath it. A fine white fog hangs over water swirling with cormorants. My social sabbatical has ended; soon I will pick up my friend Saxon in Southport to help sail my little ship back home. But in the morning mist, the tide flowing beneath me like the breath of the world, I pause to say thanks for the grace of nature surrounding me. I am an atom, afloat in an ocean of wonder, adrift in a seascape of beauty. How miraculous, that we are here at all to witness these precious moments. Our minds reflect the natural world, just as this river reflects the light of the moon.

John Wolfe studied creative nonfiction at UNCW. He can be found online at thewriterjohnwolfe.com.

Howl of the Wild

Coastal coyotes are now just part of the neighborhood

By Virginia Holman

Photographs by Todd Pusser

A few months back, one of my neighbors in Carolina Beach turned on her kitchen light at about 5 a.m. Her house abuts a highly vegetated area near a vast expanse of woods. She heard a yap, then a yowl, then a chorus of coyote yips and howls began. She recorded the impromptu concert on her phone from the safety of her back porch and posted it on social media. After a couple of minutes, she exhaled a whispered, "Wow!"

I've lived in the Cape Fear region for more than 15 years, and I can count on one hand the number of times I have seen a coyote — usually while driving at night at the edges of undeveloped areas. I do, however, hear them regularly, particularly in the vast protected acreage of Sunny Point, which is a federal no trespassing zone. Sometimes, when an ambulance siren passes by, these "song dogs" will wail along. If you think you hear coyotes in the distance, listen closely. You may find it hard to determine how many coyotes are present, and you may vastly overestimate how many you hear. That's because even tiny groups of coyotes, two or three, vocalize in such a way that they sound like a pack of six to eight. This complex vocalizing is known as the "Beau Geste" effect, and is an effective way for coyotes to reduce unwanted interactions.

Are there more coyotes in coastal areas than there were a few years ago? Not really. According to NC Wildlife Resource Commission's black bear and furbearer biologist, Colleen Olfenbuttel, coyote populations in coastal areas "remain stable overall." But that doesn't mean we aren't seeing them more. Although coyotes prefer living in wild areas, they are quite capable of thriving in suburban and urban environments, dwelling in what we may perceive as "human territory." When wild areas decrease, the wily coyote adapts, looking for more abundant sources of food and new places to raise its offspring. People are also documenting their coyote sightings on social media with increasing frequency — a tool that often has a way of overemphasizing fear at the expense of facts — and may make it seem as if a population has increased suddenly.

In urban environments, coyotes have occasionally appeared in some unexpected places: a walk-in cooler at a Chicago Quiznos, curled up on a train car seat, and even on an elevator. In the vast majority of these cases, the animals aren't behaving in a manner imminently threatening to humans — in the case of the Quiznos coyote, it appears the canid was just looking for a cool place to nap. Most of us aren't thinking much about coyotes at all, until we see one, hear one, or are invited to think about them.

A survey conducted by UNC Wilmington professors Chris Dumas and Rachael Urbanek indicates that most of us are

fairly neutral about the presence of coyotes in New Hanover County — that is, until they are within a mile of our home. Their questionnaire, which was sent to 4,000 residents of New Hanover County, found that people's support of coyotes diminishes the closer we think we are to them.

Urbanek says that the survey gathered responses to statements such as, "I support having coyotes" in the county, or, "I like coyotes."

"And the general response we received was that people were kind of neutral. They weren't like, yeah, I really love coyotes or I really hate coyotes. Everybody in general was neutral about the presence of coyotes in the county."

But, Urbanek continues, "Then we started asking, 'Do you support coyotes within a mile of your home?' At that point we started seeing a bit of a decline, and most respondents did not support the idea of coyotes on their property." However, for those that did support coyotes within a mile of their home or near their property, Urbanek says the average response was along the lines of 'It's a little bit scary, but I'm OK.'"

Like it or not, Olfenbuttel says, "It is normal now in North Carolina to see a coyote in your neighborhood." Surprisingly, she also says it is normal to see a coyote during the day: "Daytime activity of a wild animal does not indicate that there's something wrong. You know, the main reason certain animals used to be more associated with nocturnal activity is one, that they were trying to avoid people; and two, there was a readily available food source." When one of these is lacking, you may have daytime sightings of nocturnal animals; not because they are sick, but because they are pressured.

She points out that coyotes are very adaptable; if they don't have small wild prey available, they'll eats rats, squirrels, feral cats or small domestic pets (cats, rabbits, and even small dogs). New Hanover County does not permit unleashed pets in the county — even cats — and it's for their health and safety. "Coyotes are omnivores. They'll eat trash, road kill, berries, you name it," says Olfenbuttel. "If you find that coyotes are straying into your immediate area, make sure that all of your outdoor trash is secured with a lid."

She also suggests you try to engage in "hazing" the animal, which includes behaviors such as tossing a handful of gravel, yelling, and clapping your hands — effective ways to get coyotes to leave. Hazing also reinforces their natural wariness of humans, which in turn reduces human-wildlife interactions and conflicts.

One thing Olfenbuttel emphasizes is the need to make sure that businesses and other high-density areas keep trash secured and to never let it overflow. This is especially important in our tourist-heavy beach towns: "If you're seeing coyotes on the beach strand, it is because the coyote is attracted to something. Those open-style trash barrels are really attractive — especially if food is left in them." They can also attract "all kinds of base prey animals — rats, raccoons — that coyotes eat." She recommends that all public areas use trash containers with flap-style lids or other secure coverings.

Trash isn't the only thing that can lure a coyote to the beach. In recent years, coyotes have discovered that an abundant sea turtle nesting season may mean an easy meal. If there's one thing we love in coastal North Carolina, it's our sea turtles, and coyotes love sea turtle eggs. Beth Darrow, senior scientist at the Bald Head Island Conservancy, says that last June, Bald Head Island began seeing nightly predation attempts of endangered sea turtle nests.

According to Darrow, "The first line of defense is to install wire cages, made of wire or plastic fencing material," which can be placed over the nests to keep coyotes and predators like foxes from easily digging up a nest. Other methods such as hazing are useful, but only to a point. Darrow points out that if you use the same hazing technique consistently, coyotes can become used to it. Certain individual coyotes preying on turtle nests can become immune to hazing. During nesting season, "We patrol the beaches from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. in UTVs. If we see a coyote at a nest, we'll yell at it or throw a stick or something at it." says Darrow. "Identifying a problem coyote is easy because it has learned not to be afraid of humans or hazing. We've hazed coyotes who will just go up to the dunes to wait while we repair a nest. As soon as we start to leave, it will come down to the nest again. It becomes a game of whack-a-mole."

After repeated issues with several problem coyotes, the conservancy brought up the idea of lethal predator management to the Village of Bald Head Island. LPM is another technique that is commonly used by sea turtle protection programs, and it's something she says has been successful in Florida and Georgia. Says Darrow: "It's not just for coyotes. It also used for red foxes, sometimes armadillos, raccoons, and even native predators who are really interested in the nests of one of our most treasured endangered species. The goal of LPM is not to trap the entire population of coyotes. It's to reduce the total number of individuals, especially the individuals who have figured out that endangered sea turtle eggs are a food source."

It's also a last resort.

Coyotes are relative newcomers to North Carolina's barrier islands. Darrow says the first anecdotal reports of coyotes on Bald Head started in the early 2000s, after Corncake Inlet shoaled in, creating a land bridge between Pleasure Island and Bald Head. And coyotes as a species weren't reported in North Carolina before 1938. "In general," Darrow says, "so much of what we know about coyotes and the research that's been done pertains to inland coyote populations. Now all of our barrier islands in North Carolina have coyotes, and each municipality deals with them differently. I think that it might be time for the different organizations to get together and talk about management, especially as it comes to coastal communities."

Humans must adapt, because these intelligent creatures are here to stay.

Author and creative writing instructor Virginia Holman lives and writes in Carolina Beach.

Dreamers Welcome

Behind the proper facade of a dignified Queen Anne house lies a secret: a chic and comfortable boutique inn

By William Irvine · Photographs By Rick Ricozzi

In 1895, John Harriss Howe, a leading builder in Wilmington, was invited to send a presentation of his architectural work to the Atlanta Exposition, an event designed to promote the American South and attended by more than 800,000 people. Today the exposition is best remembered for the Atlanta Compromise speech given by Booker T. Washington, a call for racial cooperation.

A member of the prominent Howe family — who were free black carpenters and joiners in the city before the Civil War — John Howe represented the latest of four generations of men of color active in Wilmington's building community. And among the 12 photographs in Howe's architecture display was a recently completed Queen Anne-style residence on South Fourth Street, now known as the Williams-MacMillan House and the new home of Dreamers Welcome, a stylish boutique inn.

Stephan Watts, the founder and general manager of Dreamers Welcome, is no stranger to comfort. Raised in Germany and now living in New York, he has spent more than 20 years in the hospitality industry, and also runs a boutique vegetarian hotel in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He was looking for a new project in the Southeast when he happened upon a bed-and-breakfast hotel for sale in Wilmington and took a tour. From the very beginning, he was hooked. The combination of the historic Victorian house and the walkable downtown sold him. And being someone who likes a challenge, he envisioned a hotel for adventurous and sophisticated travelers.

In partnership with artist Roy Delgado — who was responsible for every detail of Dreamers Welcome, from the Tropical Depression macramé wall art to the soft sofa pillows to the curation of the Spotify play list — he has created an elegant but minimal design that combines the amenities of a boutique hotel

with the comfortable feeling of staying in a private house.

The approach to the house is welcoming. A cast-iron gate opens onto a lush selection of exotic plants; in its previous life, the house was on the Azalea Festival tour, and the owners have simplified and streamlined it in keeping with their green, minimal aesthetic. The architecture is a mish-mash of Queen Anne and shingle style — a dramatic mass of planes and forms in three stories with a gabled roof.

The inn is divided into four room categories: The Traveler, The Romantic, The Visionary and The Dreamer, the last being an apartment suite with a private entry, a king-size bed in a separate bedroom, with a living area and kitchenette. There is also a three-bedroom bungalow available in nearby Sunset Park.

Stepping inside, you enter a world that is light and tailored with a distinctly sophisticated California vibe. In the parlor, where guests can congregate for breakfast, a pink tête-à-tête from Anthropologie sits in front of the massive baronial fireplace, original to the house but lightened with a bright white tile surround. Behind this room is the domain of Anna Masteller, the manager and private chef, who hails from the Monterey Peninsula and creates the complimentary vegan breakfast for guests. Or you can ask for the chef's special (think whole grain peach fritters and fresh-pressed grapefruit juice).

Across the hall is a beautiful first-floor bedroom suite with a view of the garden. It has an enormous greenhouse bathroom with Versace wallpaper. In the stairhall, there are stylish newels and balustrade on the staircase, which were designed by artist Jane Iredell Meares, who with her husband, William Arthur Williams, were the first occupants of the house. But what dominates is the three-story dried amaranth plant hanging, an example of the dried flower art of Marcos Toledo of Influorescent in New York, who came and stayed at the property to create this and other dried flower installations (there is also a stunning dried celosia hanging in the parlor) . The center hall ceiling is covered with elegant bronze leafing that was applied square by square.

On the second floor, the atmosphere of the guest rooms is serene and tailored, with custom work spaces and open closets. The walls are done in a triple-finished plywood process created by local craftsman Stanislav Raetchi; the blond wood is sanded, waxed, then sanded again. Each room has a custom console table/desk and a map of downtown with suggested shopping and restaurants. TVs are hidden behind abstract canvas works from Küdd: Krig Home.

Ascending to the third floor is like a trip to a 1960s nightclub, with vibrantly patterned pink and orange wallpaper in the stairhall. The third-floor aerie feels like a beige cocoon, with a large bed

surrounded by waxed beige walls, and scenic views over the churchyard garden and the rooftops of historic houses nearby.

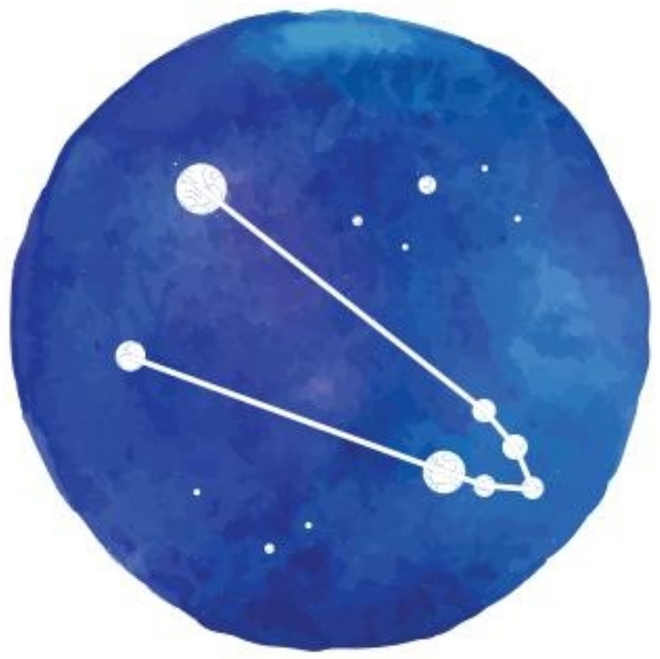
A massive en suite bathroom features a slipper tub and a large rain shower head head — the drain is actually in the center of the floor.

And when you are not gazing out your window, attending an on-site yoga class or eating some of Anna's delicious food, there are myriad extras that can be arranged: a gourmet picnic lunch at the beach, boating to a private barrier island, stand-up paddleboard and surf lessons, massages and wellness treatments. It is no surprise to learn that Dreamers Welcome has already become a film-industry favorite. No names, please.

Dreamers Welcome, 118 South Fourth St., Wilmington:
www.dreamerswelcome.com.
Email: info@dreamerswelcome.com.
Instagram: dreamers.welcome.

William Irvine is the senior editor of Salt. *His latest book,* Do Geese See God? A Palindrome Anthology, *is available on Amazon.*

May the Force Be With You



All things seem possible in May

By Astrid Stellanova

There's so much to love about May: Memorial Day, Dance Like a Chicken Day and Star Wars Day.

Star Children, attention must be paid to the May born, whether Taurus or Gemini. Some May children are deeply worried, even clinically depressed. Others, unusually sunny and full of a belief in possibilities.

Queen Victoria, John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, George Lucas, Audrey Hepburn, Adele, Bing Crosby, Mark Zuckerberg, Bob Dylan and Janet Jackson share the same birth month. One way or another, they will get your attention.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
This we know: You could talk to a telephone pole. Your motto in life is, "I don't talk to strangers, so introduce yourself, Honey!" In the midst of the viral epidemic, you want to wade into the crowd and give the world a big old hug and talk. Admirable, if dangerous. Dial pals for solace if you absolutely must.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Hey you, with the chip on your shoulder! Do. Not. Try. Me. Your friends and family are dying to say that, want you to get off the crazy train and remember who loves you. Love isn't always enough, but neither is rage. Grab your chance for redemption.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Serial hobbyist that you are, you're itching to build a better tree house, or make the world's finest pizza. Well, Honey, just go full tilt boogie, because it is good to explore all creative outlets. Summer brings opportunities to learn and create.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Fluent in the language of sarcasm, are you? Sugar Booger, it's time to find another way to mix and mingle. You're quick with the quip but that can be tiresome for your bestie. Listen with the same dedication and you'll learn your nearest and dearest truly need to be heard.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
Last month was about as fun as dropping the hair dryer into the bath water. Electrifying and horrifying. There's still some fallout, and Darling, it must unfold before you get back to whatever normal is. Your pack is waiting for you to get past that final hurdle and find peace.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
Measure twice, cut once, Sugar Pie. Not that meticulous you need to hear such advice but in these unusual times, details must be observed, and you have been way too preoccupied. Snap out of it, and recognize freedom from a redo by doing it right.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
You are the boss, Applesauce, of your life. Nobody else but you. As stubbornly as you cling to the past, the present is right there before you with a lot of hope, light and love. Still clinging to some very old notions about who was what, when you were a younger you? Fuggedabout it.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
You are closer to catching lightning in a jar for the second time, Honey. Don't let anything convince you that your idea isn't worth the work and worry. You see something that not everybody has the vision to see, the mind to master it and the mouth to broadcast it. Do it!

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
You slowed the boat and now you are nearing the season when all good things will come to You Who Waited. Patience will be rewarded. Remember, Sweet Thing, all the people who supported you on what looked like a Moon mission. They stood by. Now share the spotlight.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
Now you are in a particularly interesting phase of your life, caught between contemplating and cogitating — and overthinking. It's easy for you to get stuck there, because you are seeing multiple dimensions. Resist stalling, Honey, because if your hunch is right, act!

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
Now what? You like a clear path laid out and can't see ahead. Murkiness is just the way it is, Love Bug. Nobody is getting a marked map these days with a big X over the treasure. Yet a big part of you recognizes that the treasure isn't hidden. It's right there, in your own hand, within your big heart.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
There's just something about a fire sign that makes people gather round. Aries fire can either warm or burn, and some get too close. Here's a chance to find a balance. Not everyone needs for you to bring them a Hershey bar. Or a scolding. Try subduing that big old force field for a few days.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

ALMANAC

May

By Ash Alder

May is a series of miracles so intertwined that nothing feels separate from it.

Take, for example, the mockingbird fledgling, who leaps from its nest 12 days after hatching.

Twelve days.

The descent is less than graceful. More like a stone than a feather. And when he lands, stunned, on the soft earth beneath the tree, each blade of grass performs its highest service. As if cradled in the hands of an invisible, benevolent force, the fledgling rests.

Tender new life abounds. White-tail fawns take their first wonky steps. Red fox kits explore a world outside their den. And like the mockingbird fledgling, now flapping its newfound wings and hopping in the grass, these precious babes are easy prey.

As baby bird performs his *hop-flap-plop* routine, mama and papa bird stay close, ever ready to defend him. That's the thing about mockers. If ever you've seen one chase off a raven, jay or crow, then you're familiar with the raspy battle cry of a tiny beast that knows no fear.

Days have passed, and the fledgling's wings are growing stronger. There's no shortage of ants, grasshoppers and beetles for feeding, and under his parents' watchful eyes, he's gaining air with every jump.

Not far from the tree where the mocker babe hatched is a quiet road not far from your house.

This is where you enter the picture.

On a leisurely walk, the air sweet with magnolia blossoms and spring roses, you notice a stopped car, the driver kneeling in front of a small lump in the middle of the road.

"I can't leave him here!" says the driver, a young mother who is visibly shaken by the sight of this tiny being — a mockingbird fledgling whose wiry feathers and wide yellow beak somehow make it look like a curmudgeonly old man.

He isn't injured, you observe. Just spent from a recent flight lesson. Relieved, the driver snags a toddler shirt from the back of her car, and you use it to gently scoop him off the road.

When you set him down on the earth, the fledgling gives a brave little squawk, flaps his wings, then musters the strength for a few shaky steps before plopping down in the soft grass for more rest.

One day, you think, *that mockingbird will take flight.* And one day, sooner than you think, he will have one hundred songs to sing.

You hear a crow caw in the distance, and as mama bird watches from her nearby perch, you can't help but smile at the miracle of it all.

The Mother's Moon

The Full Mother's Moon rises on Thursday, May 7 — three days before Mother's Day. Also called the Milk Moon, Flower Moon and Corn Planting Moon, this month's full moon is a brilliant reminder to celebrate all mothers — human and animal — for the glorious gift of life. Speaking of gifts, here's one for Mama: daylily bulbs (to bloom in June).

The Rose Garden

May is a jubilant explosion of fragrant blossoms.

Crabapple and dogwood. Violets and magnolia. Flame azalea and flowering quince.

And then there are roses.

If you've ever known a rose gardener, then you've seen the light in the eyes of a soul who has seen life after perceived death (dormancy).

I once toured the rose garden of a retired Episcopal minister who described the deep sadness of cutting his blossoms each winter, and the wonder of their return. I'll never forget his tender nature or, for that matter, his favorite rose.

"Dolly Parton," he told me, pointing to a fragrant red rose in the corner of his garden. "She's wonderful. She just blooms and blooms."

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe. — John Muir

Garden Spotlight

Let's hear it for fennel, folks!

This perennial herb has long been cultivated for the digestive-aiding properties of its fruit (fennel seeds), but its bulb and leaves are likewise packed with nutrients.

Fennel is good medicine for the heart, skin and bones. It aids with inflammation and metabolism. And, lucky for (most of) us, it tastes like licorice.

There are dozens of ways to eat the bulb, but if you're looking for fresh and easy, try pairing it with red plums (thinly sliced) for a slam-dunk salad topped with honey-ginger dressing. Enjoy!

Outdoors Is Not Closed

A gift that amazes the child in all of us

By Clyde Edgerton

I'm writing these words in late March 2020.

My gentle editor recently told me that the *Salt* magazine theme for May's issue would be "the outdoors." I took a walk to think about how to write about that subject during these dark times.

More people are taking walks, riding bicycles — missing beaches and closed parks. I can only guess at how things will be in early May, when you are (now) reading these words. It does not seem far-fetched to guess that, by then, you or I — or both of us — will have lost people we knew, and perhaps loved. I know of no time since World War II during which I could have said that.

On my walk, I notice a wisteria vine behind a neighbor's house. I think about how, unchecked, it will begin to take over bushes, shrubs, trees — a nuisance vine. But the beauty of its blossom may counter that, depending on your relationship to the vine; that is, if it's growing in the woods you can admire it, but in your yard it may become invasive and unwelcomed. The reason I notice the vine on this walk is because late March and early April are days of Wilmington's wisteria blooming — light purple — for its three- or four-week colorful span.

I rarely, if ever, see a wisteria vine without remembering a particular wisteria vine. My mother remembered it being planted in about 1915 at the base of a trellis in her grandmother's backyard. That would have been three years before the Spanish flu epidemic. Twenty-one years later, in 1936, the federal government bought 5,000 acres in the vicinity of the homeplace, where the vine grew on its trellis, and offered it to the state of North Carolina for a dollar, with the understanding that the acreage would become a recreational site. The site became the William B. Umstead State Park, situated between Raleigh and Durham. Graveyards, as well as stone and glass remnants of an entire community, can still be found near trails and streams.

The wisteria vine planted by my grandmother survived the land transfer, and once every year for the past 70 years or so, I've helped family members clean the family graveyard near the site of the homeplace. By the 1950s, the wisteria vine began taking over wild shrubs and pine trees around the graveyard, and for a while in the early '80s it arched magnificently over a dirt road that ran through the park. This memory of it in bloom, reaching up into and over pine trees, and over the road, is unforgettable. Park rangers painstakingly extinguished the vine in the 1990s. Sadly, in my view.

My guess is that you remember an outdoor childhood spot — near a certain tree, or creek or hillside. Perhaps there was a path that led to a secret place. While outdoors interests adults, it often amazes children. When did you last climb a tree?

In a sense, outdoors is childhood. And outdoors is a gift, like a sense of humor, like strong relationships with people we like and love. Gifts. Not acquisitions growing from what we don't need.

Granted, we need toilet paper, but it's not free.

Outdoors is free.

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and most recently, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

FIGURE EIGHT ISLAND

264 BEACH ROAD NORTH | $4,150,000

268 BEACH ROAD NORTH | $3,375,000

122 BEACH ROAD SOUTH | $1,750,000
HALF OWNERSHIP

274 BEACH ROAD NORTH | $4,395,000

waterfront lots

MARSHFRONT

265 BEACH ROAD NORTH | $1,995,000

OCEANFRONT

272 BEACH ROAD NORTH | $2,850,000

MARSHFRONT

257 BEACH ROAD NORTH | $1,995,000

Figure Eight Island is special. Buzzy & Ellen have been on the island for over 34 years and would love to show you around. Please give us a call to discuss any and all of your real estate needs!

BUZZY NORTHEN TEAM

910.520.0990 | www.BuzzyRealEstate.com

Figure Eight Island's Top Selling Broker

LUXURY PORTFOLIO INTERNATIONAL

Intracoastal REALTY CORPORATION

Leading REAL ESTATE COMPANIES OF THE WORLD

MOEN®

Via™ Faucet in
Fusion™ finish

BEST. DECISION. EVER.

For projects of any size, perfection often requires making difficult decisions. Allow the experts at Ferguson to make things easy by introducing you to an extensive collection of stylish products from prominent brands, all designed to bring your vision to life. Learn more at **fergusonshowrooms.com**

FERGUSON
Bath, Kitchen & Lighting Gallery

WILMINGTON

FERGUSONSHOWROOMS.COM

©2020 Ferguson Enterprises, LLC 0320 1825902